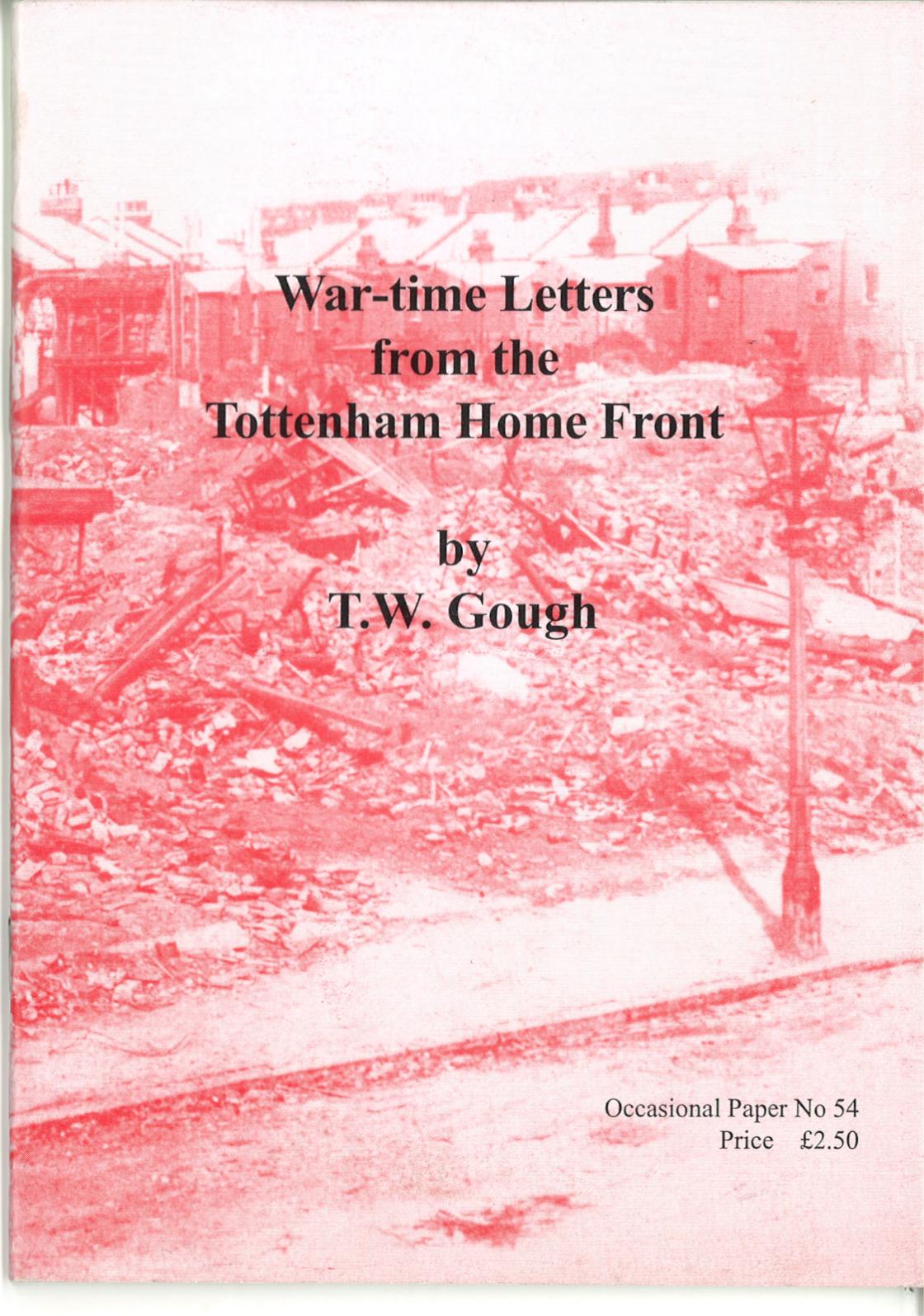


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WARTIME LETTERS
From the
TOTTENHAM HOME
FRONT
BY T.W. GOUGH



**War-time Letters
from the
Tottenham Home Front**

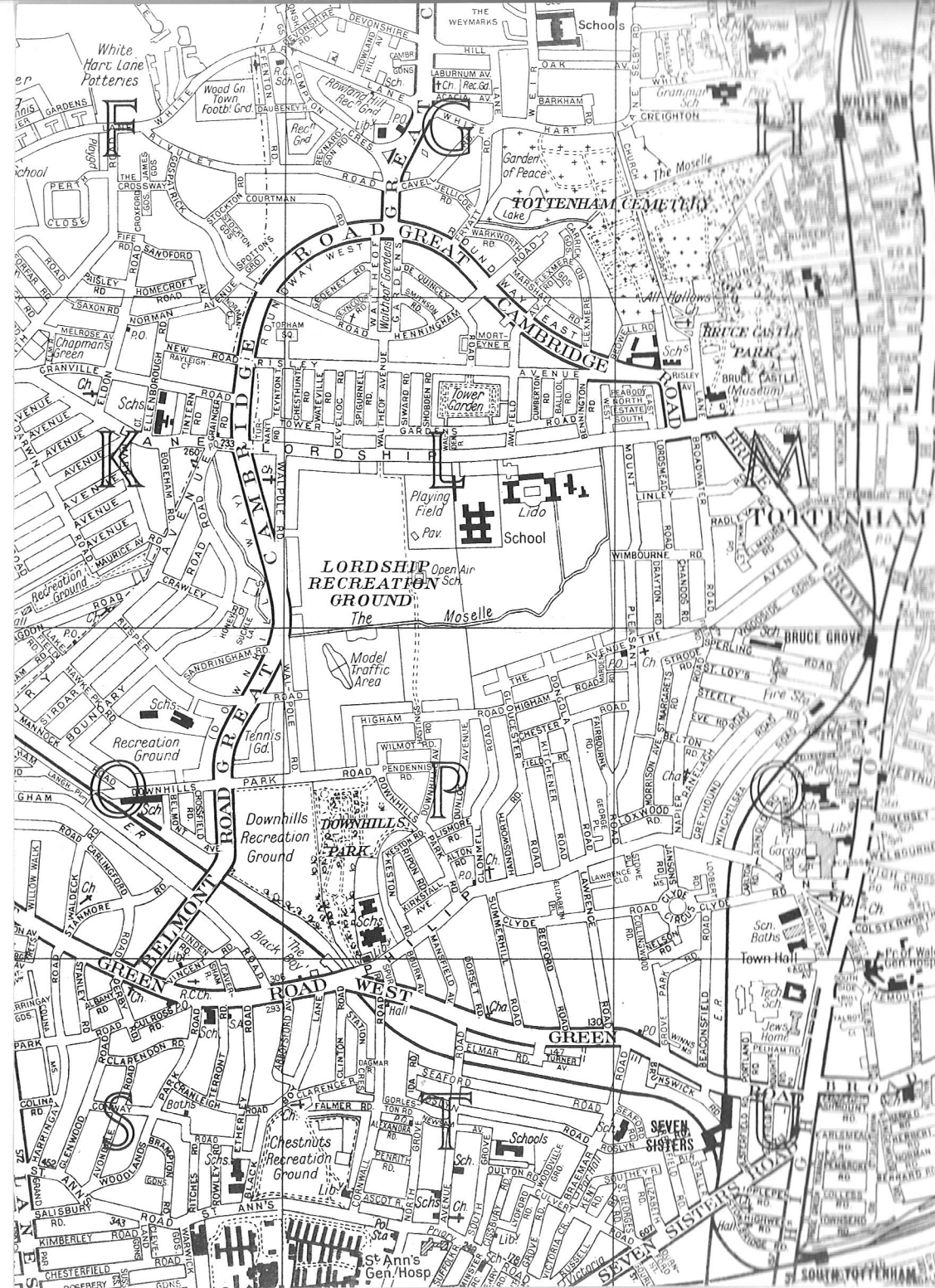
**by
T.W. Gough**

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The Family



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WAR-TIME LETTERS FROM THE TOTENHAM HOME FRONT.

Foreword.

The excerpts which follow are from letters written to me by my mother with additions from father, from the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939 to the beginning of 1941. They cover the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, and portray the life of a working-class family during those days when Winston Churchill had said to the nation on 13 May 1940, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

I have omitted some personal family details where they are not relevant, but otherwise have not changed the text and though history may have later corrected some comments, nevertheless they indicate the feelings at the time.

The Family

Mum and Dad lived in Cambridge Gardens, a small cul-de-sac off the Great Cambridge Road on the White Hart Lane council estate in Tottenham. Dad was a cabinet maker, but like many in his trade, was experiencing periods of unemployment before the war due to mass production methods. There were four children, the youngest Ernest, nicknamed Boy, who was eleven in September 1939, followed by Joan (12), Doris (15) and myself Tom (17½).

I was a solicitor's junior clerk and had joined the Territorial Army in 1939, enlisting in the 2/7th. Middlesex Regiment at Hornsey Drill Hall. My father had served in the 1/7th. during the Great War, 1914-1918. I was mobilised on 1 September and we took over Trinity Road School in Wood Green. In December all those under the age of eighteen were posted to an Anti-Aircraft Regiment. I finished the war however with the Royal Artillery on 25 pounders.

T.W. Gough

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

"Wednesday 25th. October 1939"

"My Dear Tom,

We were so pleased to hear from you and that you had arrived at your destination. We heard on Sunday from BL that you were at Chislehurst.... BL came back to the school Saturday morning but was sent home until Monday morning as the school was full of the militia men....Boy and Joan have been to school today but only for 1 hour. They have to go to the hall at the back of the church only 12 at a time and then they bring homework home to do. Boy goes at 10 o'clock, Joan goes at 11 o'clock so it will give them something to do."

B.L. was Bill Laver who lived next door; he joined the Territorials at the same time as Tom.

The Military Training Act 1939 required men of 21 to register and those who were called up were known as "Militiamen". At the outbreak of war, the National Service (Armed Forces) Bill was passed which affected all men between 18 and 41, making them liable for service.

With the evacuation of a million and a half mothers and children on 1 September 1939, schools were closed and many occupied by the military. Half the school children left in London did not receive full time education and local arrangements had to be made for some lessons.

"27th. November 1939"

"We were pleased to hear from you as not being home we wondered where you had moved to. I hope you get the 48 hours leave next week. I hope you are not on guard tonight it is ever so rough."

"P.S." [from Dad] "When you have your rum tell the CSM or the QMS to give you a double lot that will clear off some that the army owes me. I could do with some now. Dad."

For the first few months of the war we were employed on guard duties around London, not only against the Germans, but the I.R.A. as well who were active in those days. Hendon aerodrome, De Havillands' factory at Edgware, the long tunnel outside Elmstead Woods station on the main London-Dover line, were some of the places guarded.

"14th. December 1939"

"We were pleased to hear you had arrived at your destination. ... Have you heard about your Xmas leave yet. I shall be posting a parcel off for you not later than Wednesday morning so let me know if at all possible by then.... Do you know your letters are censored. This one was. One word you put in about some chaps coming there you said the name of the place where they had gone to, but it was blacked out.... Gladys is coming home tomorrow (Friday) for good I think. They are all coming home now we have had no raids.

[From Dad.]

"I have been to the Comforts committee for Middlesex men about you and those with you and I am giving them your address so let me know if they send anything. Hope you will be able to wangle leave for Xmas. All the Best."

On 12 December 1939, I and others of us under 18 years of age were posted to an Anti-Aircraft unit at Oakham, Rutland.

"20th. December 1939"

"We got your letter on Tuesday morning and your Card came a little while ago. I am sorry you don't think you will be home for Xmas but never mind I hope you will have a jolly good time."

We were belatedly granted Christmas leave so I was able to be home, but of course the parcel had already been posted from home and was picked up by me on my return to the Battery.

"2nd. January 1940"

"Pleased to hear you arrived back safe and that the parcel was OK. But how dreadful to think that the mincepies had caused 2 deaths ! ... It is still very cold. We have had some snow last Thursday and it has not melted yet."

"12th. January 1940"

"How do you like this cold weather. I guess it is cold where you are with no heating or light. How do you keep yourself warm. ... Rationing is not too bad so far. Of course bacon or butter we cannot afford as you know. We are allowed 3¾lbs sugar a week but Dad went down the shop for me and the woman let him have 4lbs a ¼lb extra. But the meat rations will be the worst as meat is very dear."

An adult ration for one week eventually became:
8ozs fat (of which only 2ozs could be taken as butter)
2ozs tea
8ozs sugar
1oz cheese
4ozs bacon or ham.

Meat was not rationed by weight but by price which was set at 1s.10d. per person, and included bone, fat and gristle. It paid to be friendly with your butcher.
Bread was not rationed until after the war.

"22nd January 1940"

[From Dad] "I was pleased to hear they had given you a drop of rum, it will do you good and keep out the cold. We are frozen out, the hot water froze on Thursday so we can't have any fire in the kitchen, we are living in the front room. On Friday morning about 8.40 a.m. a pipe burst and the water came through your bedroom ceiling on to Boy and made him jump out of bed pretty quick.... Well Tom have you had anything from the Middlesex Comforts. They told me last Wednesday they were sending you gloves, books etc. that day. I told them that there were thirteen of you, all Middx. ...I suppose you have heard about the explosion at the powder mills. I have heard a bit about it from a man who works there but I will tell you when you come home. I was in the front room when it happened and it shook our windows [so] that I thought they were coming in. We thought it was the guns. I thought now for it, more so when I saw the balloons up."

From *A Short History of the Royal Gunpowder Factory* by W.H.Simmons, (1963),
"In the morning of Thursday, 18th. January 1940, the neighbourhood was startled into believing that a real raid had started. It was, however, an explosion at a nitroglycerine mixing house. The morning was intensely cold and the enquiry left little doubt that some nitroglycerine had been handled in the frozen condition. Three men ... in the building were killed as also were two others by blast just outside the traverse when bringing more paste. Three other men, in a nitroglycerine washing house only a hundred yards from the explosion, continued at work in spite of damage to the building until the operation was over,...[for which] they were awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal.

Only three months later, on Saturday, 20th. April 1940, a very similar accident occurred in another mixing house. Again, five men were killed, and as in the previous case, rumours of sabotage were rife. on this occasion there was no icy blizzard to freeze nitroglycerine... and no explanation was found by the Court of Enquiry on which the explosion could definitely be blamed."

"25th. January 1940"

"I had a letter from my cousin Edie at Chingford. She tells me Uncle Tom had several panes of glass broke in his greenhouses with the explosion last week. It really was a terrible thing and yet I worked there in the last war."

"31st. January 1940"

"What awful weather it is, isn't it. We have had heavy falls of snow here. It was bitterly cold Saturday and Sunday. Boy & Joan have not been to school this week. Some schools that have opened have had to close owing to frozen pipes. It really is serious. We are still living in the parlour as when we shall get the pipes mended I don't know as it has been freezing too much for them to mend them."

"6th. February 1940"

"The kitchen stove is red rust with damp. The place looks like a lumber room. Dad has been round to the office to try and see someone to try and get it done quick but there is no one there, they are all out doing repairs and of course there are some worse than us. In Fryatt Road they have to come to the turncock in the road for water as none of the houses have any. We have got stuck for coal. We had ½ ton on order but Brown could not get it up and then the order came out last week only 2 sacks at a time."
[From Dad]" Well Tom I have not been able to find a job yet. I walked to Ponders End yesterday but no luck so if I don't find something I shall join up again so if you hear of a vacancy in the cookhouse or Q.M. stores or wet canteen drop me a line."

"16th. February 1940"

"I hope to move into the kitchen tomorrow (Saturday)... So I hope this is the last of this years freeze up anyway.... Granny is getting on slowly. She is stuck for coal now. I expect Brown will only have 1 cwt for us tomorrow. What a mess up the government have made of it. You see we are registered with coal and coke and you can only get it where you are registered. You cannot get it where you like even if you have ready money. We shall soon be rationed with meat. I don't know how we shall go on then as meat is very dear now and scarce."

"Granny" was Dad's mother.

"6th. March 1940"

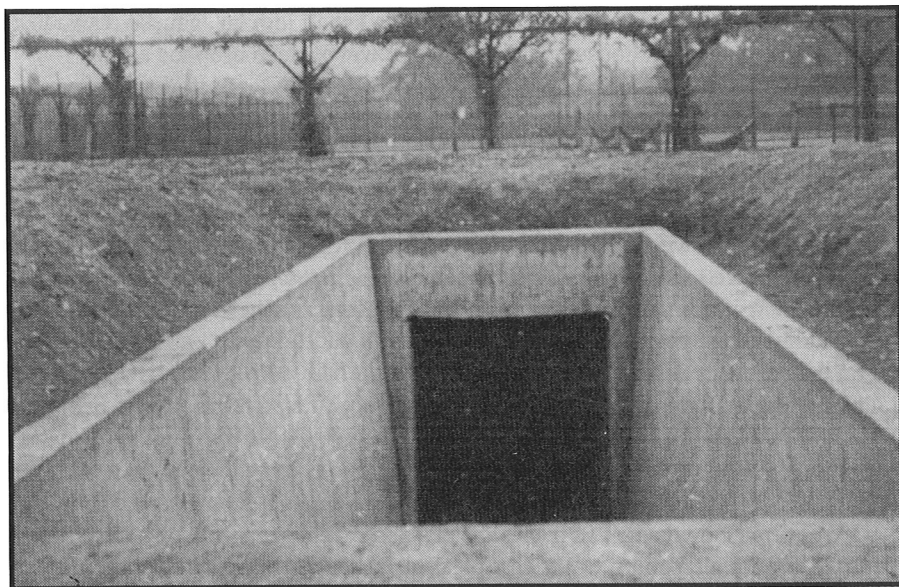
"We were glad you arrived back safe and was able to get a lift in the lorry. It was better than walking 5 miles.... We were pleased to hear you had a wireless now. It will make things a little brighter although there is nothing much on now, only Garrison

Theatre. What do you think of it. "Mind my bike", "Chocolates, cigarettes, programmes", "Can't help larffing can yer ?", "My blue pencil brother Sid."

These were catch phrases in the programme and became very popular. The words "blue pencil" of course referred to the censor who obliterated any words or phrases with his blue pencil which were deemed helpful to the enemy.

"12th. March 1940"

"I am glad you heard *Garrison Theatre* after all. I bet you all said Blue pencil Hitler when you had to turn out I do hope you will get leave for Easter. I suppose you will have 7 days then. If at all possible let me know when you are likely to walk in so that we have enough dinner for you as now we are rationed with meat. How we shall work it out we don't quite know as meat is terribly dear. We are only allowed 1s.10d. [about 9p.] worth a week each, not like sugar, so may ozs per head. I haven't used any meat coupons yet but I expect I shall have to tomorrow. Thank you for sending in a form MASC (whatever that stands for). It will be a relief if we only get a few shillings. Everything is costing more. In another 3 weeks we shall have another 1s. to put to the rent as the rates have gone up owing to ARP [Air Raid Precautions] and evacuation. That will make the rent £1-1-9d.... Boy heard today that he goes to school all day next week at Devonshire Hill. We have all had forms about second evacuation for school children if London is bombed but we are not letting Joan and Boy go. I don't know



Public air raid shelter in Bruce Castle park

of any that are going."

"Wednesday 3rd. April 1940"

[From Dad] "I heard that men are being taken on at the GPO [General Post Office] so wrote them stating my age, ex-service, had been on the PO before. The reply I got was that they regret to state that they had nothing to offer me. I have heard since that they don't take anyone over 44. I am going to try and get that from the PO in black and white. I look at it this way if we are good enough for the army then we are suitable for the PO."

"Thursday, 11th. April 1940"

[From Dad] "I had a form the other day for the Gunpowder factory. I don't know whether I shall take the job if they send for me because by what I hear the money is very low in fact after I have paid fares and etc. we should only have 1s.6d. more than we have now so if I don't soon get a job I shall join up again and then I will get a tin hat.... Doris has left her job at the Dunlops and is working at the British Oxygen Co on munitions which is better for her.... I expect we shall soon have a visit from blue pencil Hitler now. That will make a change but won't he stop a packet."

"Tuesday 16th. April 1940"

Many thanks for your letter received this afternoon and also to Wish you Many Happy Returns of the Day. We little thought last year when you joined the Terris that you would be in a war.... How's this for good news. Dad has started work in the Waltham Abbey Powder Mills. He filled a form in last Wednesday. Friday afternoon a card came telling him to report to the Mills at 9 o'clock Saturday morning. He passed the doctor and everything and was going to start Sunday night at 10.30. So he is on night work this week. He will be on early shift next week. So really he does night work once in 3 weeks. He leaves home about 8.30 as it is rather a long way to go. It cost[s] 1s. a day fare as he cannot get a workmans. It is such a blessing that he is working. He is in the Cordite Section. I was in the Guncotton section in the last war. He says the place is alive with sentries all KRR.... He does not wear his own clothes. He has white trousers, black coat and a cap like a jockey's cap. I guess he looks a lad. No buttons on the clothes, all tapes. I had to cut the buttons off his vest, pants and shirts, and sew tapes on. I knew how to do them as we were not allowed any buttons. They are searched when they go in for any matches or anything else. Of course you know what dad is for putting nails, screws and all sorts of things in his pockets, well Sunday night we had a general turn out. They have to be so careful....

We are just going to listen to Jack Warner and Gracie Fields in the BEF [British Expeditionary Force] forces and then [are] going to bed. I have been to bed earlier this week than I have for a long time. I have to be up at ¼ to 7 for Dolly. She likes her job

better than the other one. It is shell case making. I done my bit in the last war so did Dad. This war I am still doing my bit, Dad and Dolly on munitions and you away. So thats that."

"Monday, 22nd. April 1940"

"You will be sorry to hear that Dad has been put off from the Powder Mills owing to the explosion which I expect you have seen in the paper. It is worse than the papers say. About 800 he thinks has been put off today. Will tell you all about it when you come home. But perhaps it is for the best. One never knows."

"Monday, 6th. May 1940"

[From Dad] "What do you think of the mess up in Norway. Poor old Terriers theyv'e fell in it the same as in 1915. I think it's about time they chucked Chamberlain out and give the job to Eden or Duff-Cooper, they have both served in the PBI [Poor Bloody Infantry] and understand."

146th. Brigade, comprising 2,500 troops, was composed of Territorials. The last of our troops were evacuated from Norway in early June.

On 7 May the American ambassador, Joseph P. Kennedy, reported to Washington that he considered that England would lose the war. Later he said that Chamberlain's speech in the House of Commons during the debate on the defeat of the ill-equipped British Expeditionary Force in Norway was, "Lamentable and lacking in grip".

Leopold Amery in that debate made a historic speech. He quoted Oliver Cromwell's famous words to John Hampden, "Your troops are most of the old decayed serving men and tapsters and such kind of fellows", adding that it was a good description with a few exceptions of Chamberlain's administration. He paused and then went on, "I have quoted certain words of Oliver Cromwell. I will quote certain other words. I do it with great reluctance because I am speaking to those who are old friends and associates of mine.... This is what Cromwell said to the Long Parliament when he thought it was no longer fit to conduct the affairs of the nation. 'You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. DEPART, I SAY, AND LET US HAVE DONE WITH YOU. IN THE NAME OF GOD, GO !'".

"Tuesday, 14th. May 1940"

"Well Tom it looks as though the war has really started now. I expect you know all about Churchill being Prime Minister. Isn't it dreadful for the Dutch [and] Belgium people. They came around all these houses Sunday morning asking who would take

refugees in. Mr Gloss was doing it. He said he had had no refusals at all from our square. What can we say. We would be glad enough for someone to give us shelter if we were bombed out of our homes.... Here is some good news. Dad is at school at the GPO. If he passes the test at the end of 3 weeks he will be a temporary postman for the duration of the war. They sent for him last Tuesday and was to have started this Tuesday but Saturday he had a letter saying he has to go Monday as the holiday [Whitsun] was cancelled. So I do hope he passes. He has to learn all the different districts and counties.... It did not seem to be really Whitsun. Dolly had to work as usual, Joan and Boy went to school. They had a moan over it. BL was coming home on leave but he sent a telegram Saturday saying all leave had been cancelled." [From Dad] I am going to join this new corps. It is part-time. They want first class shots or marksmen. It is for defence against Germans being dropped by parachute. I've got to do something to have another smack at the square headed blue pencil swines. Oh won't it feel fine to feel a rifle in my hands again and to have a shot at them if they ever come here. I wouldn't spare them for the way they have machine-gunned the refugees."

On 10th. May, Germany invaded Holland and Belgium. Neville Chamberlain, later the same day, tendered his resignation to the King who then sent for Winston Churchill. A National Government of all parties was formed.

"Tuesday, 21st. May 1940"

"Things are getting hot over the other side, aren't they. I do hope it will soon be finished. I do hope you will have some leave before Xmas, if not I shall have to come down and spend a weekend with you. I'll take guard over the Searchlight.... I do miss Joan and Boy on a Saturday morning. I only went down to the shops for a few things and it took me nearly 1 hour. The shops were packed.... We have not heard any more about refugees so far. But if we have any I shall certainly do my best for them after what they have gone through."

"P.S." [From Dad] "If they drop any Germans near you shoot straight and then put in for a new pair of pants. All the best."

"Sunday, 26th. May 1940"

[From sister Joan] "We have had new pieces put on our gas-masks, they are green and with white sticky stuff over it to keep it with the other part, it is because there is another smoke gas out and that stops it getting through and choke us, we have taken your civilian gas mask down in case any of ours get broken. What do you think of the King's speech? I think it was a very good one and it is the best I have ever heard him say."

The King broadcast to the nation on 24 May. "Let no one think that my

confidence is dimmed when I tell you how perilous is the ordeal which we are facing. On the contrary it shines in my heart as it shines in yours. But confidence alone is not enough. It must be armed with courage and resolution, with endurance and self-sacrifice."

"Sunday, 2nd. June 1940"

"I am very pleased to say Dad has passed all the tests in the Post Office and starts at Wood Green tomorrow at 9 o'clock. He has been measured for his uniform. So I have told him he will have to get a wardrobe all to himself. He has his best suit, his suit he is now wearing, he will have a postmans uniform and if he gets a uniform for the LDV [Local defence Volunteers, the forerunner of the Home Guard] he will not be hard up for clothes.... Do you hear the wireless now. Fancy the King of Belgium letting us down. But it is rumoured that he is not the real King. He is a fake. The real King was killed in a car smash in 1935 and Hitler put this one in his place. It is all a mystery. We are rounding up the spies now alright. We ought to have done it before."

[From Dad] "Hope you are enjoying yourself and making the best of things. I know you are not having it all beer and skittles but things will brighten up soon. Well what do you think of the BEF now. They have made a wonderful fight and have proved better men than the Jerries. I have followed the retreat with interest, as you know I was in two, one on the Somme and one on the Lys, both of which were no picnic but I think this one was worse but they fought well.... I have just heard that they are digging trenches in the Reck for the LDVs, isn't it kind of them. I shan't have far to go and perhaps they will send a car for me and bring me home. Do you think they will give us a rum ration."

PS. One of the BLs pal of the 1/7 got home safe. Tomorrow I am going to see "Pullthrough" to find out if his boy is alright."

The story about the Belgian king was in the previous Friday's Daily Mirror. Real or not the King of the Belgians had ordered his commander-in-chief to ask for an armistice to take effect from midnight 27 May. This put our troops in a desperate situation.

"Pullthrough!" was a nickname which Dad had for his old army pal, Bennett, a tall thin man who lived in Laburnham Avenue opposite us. His son, Sonny, served in the 1/7 Middlesex and did get back from Dunkirk. A "pullthrough" was a lead weight on a cord which was dropped through a rifle barrel, then pulled back with a piece of cloth in order to clean it.

"Sunday, 9th. June 1940"

[From Dad] "I suppose you have been very busy with Fritz coming over the east coast not very far from you was it? Well I expect we will have him soon, it will make

a change so long as he doesn't bomb the greenhouse and spoil the tomatoes.... What do you think of things now with Musso coming in. There is nothing to worry over him. He only wants one knock and his troops will run for miles like they did in '17."

Italy declared war on Great Britain and France on 10th. June 1940. Either the news was broken earlier or the letter is dated wrongly.

"Monday 17th. June 1940"

"We are so pleased to hear you were quite safe. We did not know quite so much about the air raids in Lincoln. The papers do not tell us much Whatever is going to happen now that the French have given in. I never thought they would but I suppose the poor things could not help it.... I hope he never lands in England. ... Boy is at Scouts now. He has sold your/his scout hat for 9d. to buy another new one for 9d. Not bad is it. I expect you know Boy and Joan are not at school now. I would not let them be evacuated.... Have just heard Churchill speak. Short and sweet wasn't it"

[From Dad] "Everything in the gardens lovely with the war. We've got to beat Hitler on our own now and we can do it. There are about 2,000,000 of us old crows left who are quite ready to line up with you young 'uns to beat those square headed, blue pencil, tite nosed bar lambs and wipe them off the face of the earth. Pleased to hear you had come through safely. That piece of earth that hit you on your tin hat must have been a bomb dropped fairly close but in the noise and excitement you probably didn't notice it. I have had shells and bombs burst all around me and haven't heard them, you will understand what I mean after having a do like the other night.... Try to get leave soon then you'll be able to have some green peas out of the garden (bring the duck with you)."

On 17 June Marshall Petain took over the French Government and ordered the French army to cease fire. That night Churchill broadcast to the nation.

"The news from France is very bad and I grieve for the gallant French people who have fallen into this terrible misfortune.... We have become the sole champions now in arms to defend the world cause. We shall do our best to be worthy of this high honour. We shall defend our Island home, and with the British Empire we will fight on, unconquerable until the curse of Hitler is lifted from the brows of mankind."

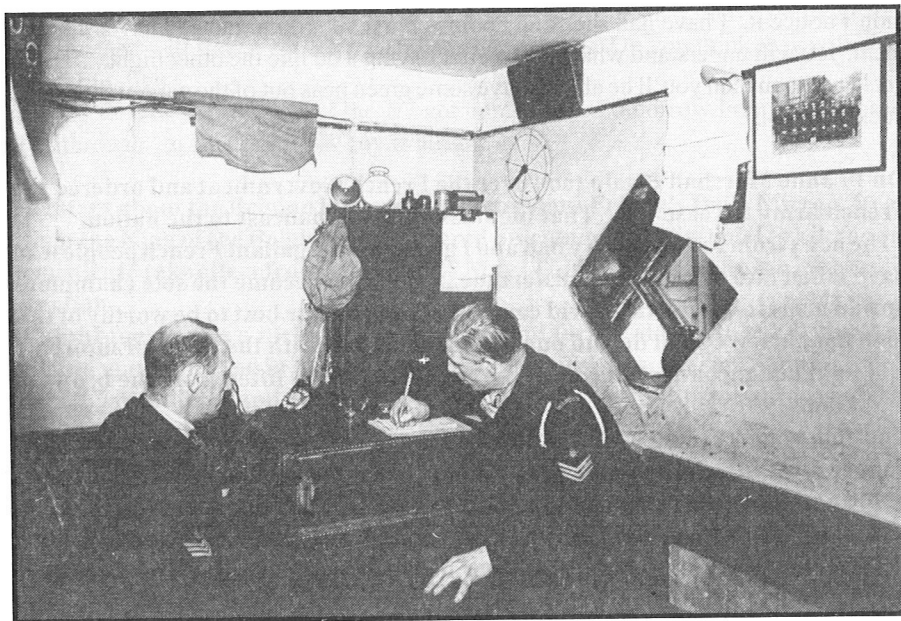
The following evening Churchill broadcast again, warning of the imminent danger of air attacks and invasion. "What General Weygand called 'The Battle of France' is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe



Crawling into an Anderson Shelter. Note, the gasmasks in their cardboard carrying boxes.



Delivering an Anderson Shelter in Loxwood Road, 1939



A typical Air Raid Warden's post



The cramped conditions inside an Anderson Shelter

may be free, and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands, but if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, and all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of a perverted science.” “Let us therefore brace ourselves to do our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘THIS was their finest hour’”.

The terms of the French armistice included the German occupation of Paris, a broad German zone of control along the Channel and Atlantic coasts, the handing over of all arms, munitions, military stores etc., and the release of all German prisoners of war, including German pilots, held on French soil.



Boy and Joan

“Sunday, 23rd. June 1940”

“Well Tom I am not sending Joan and Boy away. I do not think we shall be invaded. They will try I know. He will do his utmost to squash us. But I am keeping the carving knife handy and extra sharp and if any come walking up Cambridge Gardens, I am going to jam it straight into their bellies.... I expect before long we shall have some air raids here. But we have a good shelter and according to the papers they are standing up to the strain.”

[From Dad]. “I have no fear of invasion whilst we have the RN. No doubt he will try to drop a few hundreds by plane, if he does he will find you and I, in fact everyone with a few guts, ready for him and we won’t take any prisoners.... I went to the Drill Hall in Park Lane this morning and was put in No.2 Platoon No.3 Section and shall be on the great Cambridge Road somewhere so I shall not be far away. We don’t have many foot drills. They told us how to form threes as we didn’t learn that when I was in the army. The Major (DSO) said he was quite surprised how smart we were for men who had been out of the army over 20 years. I met several men who had served in the old 7th Middlesex. I am going again tomorrow night at 8 o’clock.... The Major told us that he intends to have rifles for us as soon as he can and he is just the man to do it.... I have just heard the news (9 o’c.) and was surprised that France should accept such terms, they have let us down so now we have to smash him on our own....we’ll do it. An Englishman will fight like the blue pencil Hell when he has his back to the wall and that’s what those B.s will find out if they come over here.”

“Sunday 23rd. June 1940”

[From sister Dolly] “You’ll be pleased to hear that Pat’s brother Harry who was in Dunkirk came home alright I don’t have to work Sundays as I’m under sixteen but the others in our firm have to. I wouldn’t mind working.”

“Monday, 1st. July 1940”

“We had our 3rd. air raid warning last Monday night. The sirens went at 5 past 1 o’clock and the all clear did not go until 10 past 4 o’clock. So we had a night up. We did not go down the shelter as there was no gunfire. There was a grand display of searchlights. They are over every night now.”

Dolly was the family's name for sister Doris

[From Dad] “On Friday we (LDV) went to the Searchlight Coy in the High Road. They have twenty two rifles there. Twenty six of us went over, only six had never used a rifle, they had been in the RAMC, so the rest of us had five rounds each on the range. I and three others scored 4 bulls and 1 inner... not too bad for old ‘uns who had not used

a rifle for twenty two years. They are trying to get us rifles as soon as they can [and] we shall keep them at home with about 50 rounds of ammo....Hitler may try any day now to drop some troops over here, to try and put the wind up the people. I don't mind let them all come there's plenty of room in England to bury them and it will be Happy Days then...."

"Sunday, 7th. July 1940"

"They are having a lot of raids round the coast now. Day raids. So it doesn't seem safe to go very far now. If we happen to have a day raid I shall be here by myself. But I'm not worrying. I expect I shall bunk in with somebody or else have someone in with me. The people have moved into next door. The man is in the Army at Swindon. He tried hard to get 48 hours leave to help the woman but he could not get it. She has 5 children all little dots so she will need some help...."

"Monday, 15th. July 1940"

"We are asked not to mention where anybody is. I expect you have heard it on the wireless. Did you hear Churchill last night. Well I did and I didn't. We called in Grannys. Arrived there just before 9 o'clock. Dad put her wireless on but it is very quiet [so] I could not hear it nor the fight over the coast of aircraft. But I did hear the fight today as it was recorded again in the 1 o'clock news. Old Hitler is losing some planes. I think he must be wondering whether to chance invading us or not. We appear to be well prepared for him around the coast There is a shortage of eggs and we can only get a little bacon....We are now rationed with tea. What a smack in the eye that was. Nobody could get any extra in.... We start rationing with margarine and cooking fats next Monday. So we shall have to cut down some of it and have bread and dripping.

You remember my Uncle Charlie and Aunt Ellen from Hull they have had some bad raids up there. They have had every window in their house broken and 2 houses in their street brought down and lots of damage all round.... Dad is now off to the LDV. They have to parade at the back of the Spurs football ground. He has got his armlet, no rifle, so when the Germans come he can show them his armlet.... I have sewn all the badges on Boys Scout blouse. Hitler won't come now if he saw Boy."

Churchill broadcast on Sunday, 14 July. He spoke of the impending invasion. "Perhaps it will come tonight. Perhaps it will come next week. Perhaps it will never come. We must show ourselves equally capable of meeting a sudden shock or - what is perhaps a harder test - a prolonged vigil. But be the ordeal sharp or long, or both, we shall seek no terms, we shall tolerate no parley, we may show mercy - we shall ask for none". Britain would defend every village, every town and every city. As for London, this, fought street by street, could easily devour an entire hostile army

His speech ended with, "This is no war of chieftains and of princes, of dynasties, or national ambition; it is a war of peoples and causes. There are vast numbers, not only in this Island but in every land, who will render faithful service in this war, but whose names will never be known, whose deeds will never be recorded. This is a War of the Unknown Warrior."

"Sunday, 21st. July 1940"

"I am glad that you are able to get a nights rest now.... HE [Hitler] gave a good speech the other day, as good as said we had got to pack up and accept his peace terms. We are likely to do that and then in a year or twos time he will start all over again."

[From Dad] "I don't know if you saw the letter in the *Mirror* from that woman who wrote about having letters from soldiers with 1½d stamps on and not having to pay extra and her pal having to pay 2d on every letter, well she has done more harm than good because most of us when sorting shut our eyes if we see a letter from a soldier without or with a 1½d stamp on but now we have orders to pick out all letters without 2½d stamp on. I think that all men in the Forces should be able to send letters free...."

On 19 July Hitler spoke in the Reichstag and made his final appeal to the British people to negotiate for peace with Germany or face unending suffering and misery.

"Tuesday, 23rd. July 1940"

"We are so pleased to hear that leave is granted and that we shall be seeing you on Saturday. We are sending the 15s. for your fare...."

[From Dad] "Please bring home with you 1 Lewis Gun which you can use from the top of the dugout, 2 rifles one for Boy and one for me so we can fire from the side of the dugout. 2 boxes of Mills bombs for Mum, Doris and Joan and 1000 rounds of ammo, 1 gall jar of Rum so we can enjoy ourselves if Hitler comes. Oh Mum would like a toilet roll as she thinks she will need it."

Raids on the convoys and East Coast towns increased in July as the Germans probed our defences. Eighteen small steamers and four destroyers were sunk, and 145 British fighters shot down for their loss of 270 planes.

"Monday, 5th. August 1940"

"The weather is simply lovely but very hot. It doesn't seem like what should be a Bank Holiday. Half the people are at work and half the shops are shut. Dad and Dolly have both had to go to work...."

It was announced by the Ministry of Labour on 13 June that the Bank Holidays would be cancelled as it was essential that the arms factories continue the high rate of production, and transport be available.

"Monday, 12th. August 1940"

"He [Cousin Reg. a visitor] has had some experiences since he has been down at Dorset. He saw that big air battle over the coast the other Thursday. Isn't Old Hitler losing some planes, 60 Thursday, 62 yesterday, 12 today. Oh boy isn't it good. Reg said it was a wonderful sight.... Well Son you will soon be getting another 3s.6d. per week.... 9 o'clock news on now. More planes down, 20 so far today and they haven't got all the reports in yet. The air force is doing grand.... Dad is waiting for his uniform.... The motto of the Home Guard is Kill the Boche. But how the blue pencil can he when he hasn't anything.... OH BOY 39 planes down today."

"PS" [From Dad] "If the RAF keep on like they are doing, 161 German planes down in four days you'll be home for good by Xmas."

On 8 August a convoy of 20 ships from the Thames estuary was attacked three times. The first attack at 9 a.m. was broken up by our fighters. The bombing was resumed by 57 JU87s near the Isle of Wight at 12.45 p.m., and then again at 5 p.m. by 82 Stuka dive bombers near the Swanage area. The convoy plodded on having lost four merchant men sunk and six badly damaged, as well as another three ships sunk by E-boats. The RAF lost 19 planes and the Germans 31. This was the air battle seen by my cousin, a regular soldier in the Royal Artillery.

On Sunday 11th. August there were heavy raids on docks, oil tanks and gasworks at Weymouth and Portland. One hundred and fifty bombers were escorted by fighters.

Monday, 12 August was "Eagle Day minus 1", the Germans having programmed the following day for a big attack on airfields and radar stations as a preliminary to invasion. Dover, Pevensey and Rye were attacked and the radar put out of action for six hours. A hundred JU88s escorted by 120 Me100s bombed Portsmouth and destroyed Ventnor radar station. Airfields in Kent were severely attacked.

Churchill sent President Roosevelt a telegram in which he said, "We have a million men waiting for rifles."

"Sunday 18th. August 1940"

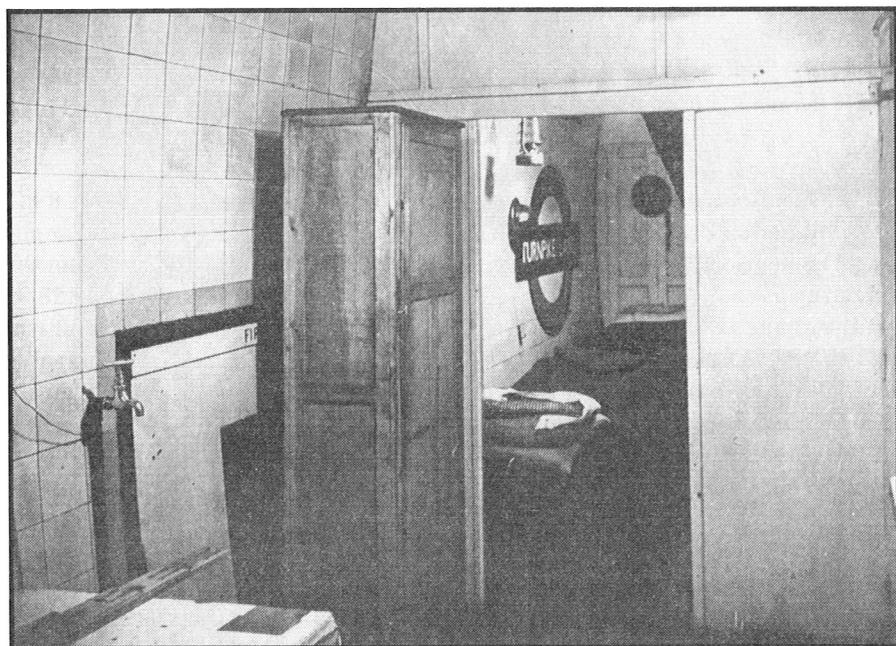
"How about air raids now, 2 today so far. OH BOY see the people run. The first on Thursday evening was about ¼ past 7. Dad was just putting his hat on to go to LDV. Boy and I were standing up the end of the garden watching a bonfire. There were about ½ a dozen children in Lavers shelter playing shops, Joan included, when the sirens



11th July 1940, first morning of aluminium collection at the Central Library; aluminium was desperately needed for aircraft production

went, didn't realise at first what they [had] all started for. But that one only lasted a ¼ of an hour. Then Friday dinner time 20 past 12. I was cleaning the glass in the front door when away went the sirens again. I just dropped the wash leather and duster and run and called Joan who was in next door (Mrs Lenny) to help get the children down the shelter. You see there are 4 young children and somebody after Gloss's moved took the floor up and the steps out of the shelter, and of course the woman cannot do it herself, so she comes in our shelter.

We did not go down on Thursday evening but after hearing that people had been machine gunned at Croydon while running to the shelters we think it best to get down first. Boy was only half way home from school so he started running and did not stop poor kid. Dad was down the Post Office just to draw Grannies pension when the siren



Civil Defence Medical Aid Point at Turnpike Lane

went. He went into the PO but they wouldn't pay him out and there he had to stop. I took the dinner out the oven and left it on the table. The all clear went at 10 past 1. Then again at 10 past 5 in the afternoon, away goes the warning again. But this time I was out. I was ½ way home from White Hart Lane with a bag of shopping. I tried to run with some woman who helped me along with my shopping bag. Some man passed us in a lorry and called out "Run Missus Run". The faster I tried to run the slower I seemed to go. So the woman asked me to go into her shelter which I was very thankful for. She lives in Barkham Road, a turning off the cemetery. A very nice person, gave

me some water and made me very welcome. I would like to have got home first but I was afraid of gunfire. I was wondering about Joan and Boy although I knew they would be alright because I had asked Mrs. Laver to keep an eye on them. Of course Dolly was at work both times. Dad was delivering letters along Westbury Avenue. He finished his delivery and came home while the raid was really on. The all clear went up at 10 past 6. Of course that made dinner late and tea late. Dolly had a job getting home because the buses were packed.

Saturday we were all on the listen, ready to run, but nothing happened. Today of course we were all here at home. I had just got all the dinner on and just going to clear up the kitchen when away goes the sirens, down the shelter we gets. Dad did not go down, he just kept the dinner going, and walked about the garden with his tin hat in his hand looking a silly xxx. This warning went at 5 past 1 and lasted until 10 past 2. So out we came again and had our dinner as it was cooked by then. I cleared up, then again at ¼ to 6 we were just sitting here excepting Dad, he had gone up and was having a bath. We didn't half laugh. I went up and banged on the door and down the shelter we go again until 5 past 6. That was only a short one. We have not heard any gunfire yet only our planes we can hear go over. But they have done a lot of damage at Croydon. I rather fancy that the one in SW London is not very far from Uncle Fred. But hasn't he lost some planes last week. It is really wonderful when you come to think of it, the number he sends over and only a few of ours lost. We really have a wonderful Air Force. It does deserve praise.

We are beginning to wonder whether we ought to go to Albert's place next Sunday. They have no shelter and then if we get stuck half way. We may be near a shelter and we may not and I think them public shelters are packed. We will have to see what happens through the week. "PIPS" [news broadcasts were introduced by signals known as "pips"] OH BOY 86 planes down so far. But we have lost some too, also some civilians. That is the sad part of it"

[From Dad] "There is one thing I noticed that they all eat their dinners up so I must have looked after it all right. We have made the shelter quite comfortable with chairs, forms, cushions, lino and carpet, in fact a home from home."

"PS" [Monday before Mum posted the letter.] "OH BOY 141 planes old Hitler lost yesterday."

Albert has been brought up since a boy by Dad's mother. He was married and lived at Potters Bar.

On Thursday, 15 August, a very decisive effort was made by the Luftwaffe, every fighter was thrown into the battle with large bomber forces. From 11 o'clock there were five main attacks; a hundred aircraft attacked airfields at Hawkinge and Lympne, and at 12 noon a large force was beaten off at Sunderland and Tynemouth. They dropped their bombs on houses but did not reach their target of the northern airfields. At the same time, Bridlington was bombed and the

airfield at Driffield, Yorkshire suffered hits on four hangars and ten of our Whitley bombers were destroyed on the ground. In Kent, Manston fighter station was attacked and at 3 p.m. a raid on Martlesham Heath fighter station. At Deal a hundred aircraft approached and were followed at 3.30 p.m. by 150 against Folkestone. At 5 p.m. 250 aircraft moved towards the Isle of Wight and spread over the surrounding counties. At 6.15 over 70 planes were engaged over Kent and Croydon, Surrey. At 6.50 the Rollason and Redwing factories were hit with over 80 casualties, the first recorded raid on Greater London, and the one mentioned in the last letter. Our losses were 34 aircraft but 182 German planes were claimed as destroyed.

On the Friday the airfields of Kent, Hampshire and Sussex were again ferociously attacked. Every single squadron was engaged and there was nothing in reserve. Losses that day were 45 German, 22 RAF. After two days of hectic fighting the Luftwaffe rested and only reconnaissance flights were made but even then the Germans lost three planes. The Sunday again saw massed formations over the south-east of England. Two days later, on the Tuesday, (20 August) Churchill addressed the House of Commons making what is his most famous speech. "The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen... NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN CONFLICT WAS SO MUCH OWED BY SO MANY TO SO FEW. All our hearts go out to the fighter pilots whose brilliant actions we see with our own eyes day after day. I hope, indeed I pray, that we shall not be found unworthy of our victory if after toil and tribulation it is granted to us."

August 24 saw the first bombs on central London in daytime. Next night more than 80 of our bombers bombed Berlin.

"Monday, 26th. August 1940"

"Many thanks for your letter we received Saturday. It was nearly 6 o'clock before the postman came with it.... We were surprised to hear that you had been moved.... I am writing this letter but may have to leave it any minute owing to a warning. We have had a lot just lately and some nasty bombs in Edmonton and Tottenham but am pleased to say we are all OK.

The first one last week was early Friday morning. We were woke up with guns and bombs before the sirens went. Dad and I looked out of the bedroom window and saw shells bursting in the sky. We were half dressed before the warning went and then we found they had bombed Edmonton. The *Alcazar* has been brought to the ground nearly, and Silver Street hasn't any shop windows left and hundreds of houses had their windows smashed. Dad says it looks awful. Saturday morning again at ¼ past 8 we had another warning, again at 4.30 in the afternoon. We never heard anything then. But



Casualty and Rescue Service Staff Office at 359 and 361 High Road; it was also the Fuel Control Office

Saturday night at 5 past 11. Well Tom I have never seen anything like it. We had all gone up to bed except Dad. I was in bed waiting for him when as I lay in bed looking out of the window I saw a bright searchlight shoot up in the sky, then another, then another and another, 4 altogether. I sat up in bed and stared out of the window, then jumped out of bed and looked out of the window. I thought Good God what is happening now. I was just going to call dad to look when the air raid wardens started shouting take cover. We got downstairs and were all ready for the shelter. We looked out the back door and really the sky was one mass of searchlights. I should think there were millions of them and the jerries planes were overhead. Five of them, Dad made us get down the shelter and were down there waiting for Mrs. Lenny to come out with her children before the warning went.

They dropped bombs on 2 houses in Cornwall Road [near Braemar Road] Mansfield Avenue [a turning out of West Green Road]. We are not sure about Seaford Road. Several people were killed. Alf, his sister and Mother were blown across their kitchen with the blast from the bombs on Cornwall Road. They have done a lot of damage in the city. That raid lasted till just after 1 o'clock. Then yesterday we were having our supper just after 10 o'clock, away go the sirens again. We were in the shelter for about an hour, came back, finished our suppers, the family goes to back to bed (including Grandma). I had gone up to bed but stood looking out the window [when] away go the sirens again. Talk about laugh, up they all have to get again. Down we go again but it did not last long before the all clear.

The next warning was this afternoon about 3.30. Of course Dad had gone to work. Boy and Joan were at school so there was only Grandma and myself here so down we go again. But not for long only about ½ an hour.... WARNING.

Just come up from shelter. Raid lasted 6¼ hours. Finish this tomorrow (today)."

"Tuesday morning. Well dear Son I will now continue your letter. I expect you have heard that London had a 6 hour raid. Boy and Joan had just gone to bed when the warning went, That is the longest raid we have had (so far). We heard the guns quite plain and heard bombs dropping, some of them were screaming bombs. The jerries went over us ever so many times. But we are all OK only a bit tired. Poor Dad did not have much rest Sunday night owing to the raids but last night well he didn't go to bed, he only lay on the bed for an hour before it was time to get up. Dolly has gone to work. Boy and Joan are fast asleep so I shall not wake them for school.

I am waiting for the copper to get hot for washing and hope to get it done before Jerry comes again. I want to finish this letter and get it off as I expect you are looking for a letter. I should have wrote Sunday night... I will get this posted as quick as I can in case it gets held up. Don't worry over us. I think we shall be OK in our shelter. I hear they have bombed Berlin again. Serve them right."

Alf was sister Dolly's boy-friend. Grandma was Mum's mother

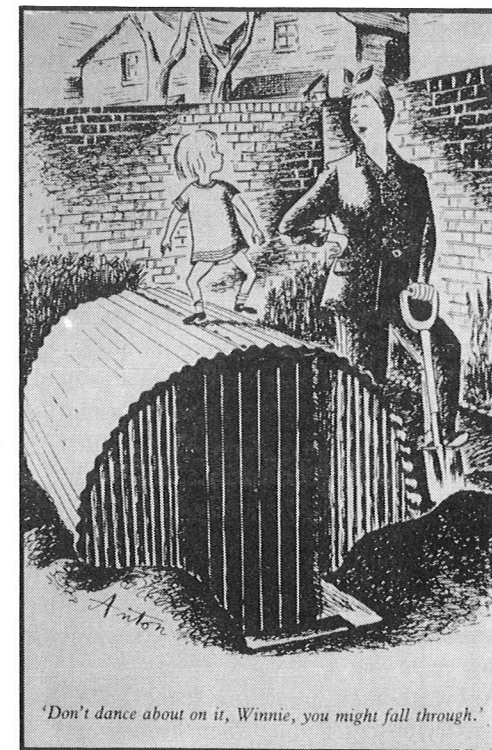
By the end of August, 1,075 civilians had been killed in the United Kingdom by

air raids. On 4 September in the *Sportpalast*, Berlin, Hitler swore revenge and that London would be destroyed.

"Sunday, 1st. September 1940"

"I am writing this and also waiting for the warning. We have had 3 already today. I am making some plum jam at the same time. So I don't know which will be first - Jam or Sirens.... Last Thursday was the only night we did not spend down the shelter. What a treat it was to get a nights rest. Last night we had a warning at 10 o'clock but it did not last long. We had not gone to bed but the next one [was] at 11 o'clock, we woke up hearing sirens, but don't laugh Tom, there had been a warning which we hadn't heard and we really got up for the all clear. What a laugh. Back we go to bed, up we get again at 12 o'clock and down the shelter we stop until 10 to 4 in the morning. Of course we were all very tired so didn't get up till gone 10 o'clock. I was lighting the fire, away goes the warning again. Breakfast time as usual. Then again I had just taken the meat out of the oven, dishing up dinner, warning again 2 o'clock. So we have to wait until the all clear at 10 to 3. He makes a practice of meal times. We cannot make out why he never comes at tea time. We were waiting for him. It is just on 9 o'clock that is his time as well. Last night it was 10 o'clock, I suppose they stopped to have supper before they came. We make good fun out of him....

We heard the planes come down on Friday afternoon. One came down in flames and landed in Angel Road, Edmonton, another one outside the gas works where Mr. Laver works. We heard them diving. What a noise it was. We saw the smoke from it from [the] next door garden.... 22 down today. Boy and Joan do not seem to mind the raids.



Not everybody had Mum's faith in Anderson Shelters!

Boy would stop to lace his boots up properly. We used to tell him to tie his laces round for quickness in the night raids. But no, he would do them up properly, now [he] has some slippers so that's alright. We have certainly done some damage in Berlin. Good job too...."

[From Dad] "I thought you would like to know that I saw that blue pencil Jerry brought down. I was on delivery in Westbury Avenue when the warning went. I carried on till the guns started when a man offered me shelter in his dug out, as it was getting a bit hot overhead and a few tramlines and old bedsteads started whistling round, I accepted. Just as I was going into the shelter he said "look postman". I turned round and there on the jerry's tail was one of our Spitfires, he put a burst into the jerry who rolled over, our boy was after him, then jerry straightened out and tried to turn, then the Spitfire flew right over and under him and gave him another burst. I think he must have killed the jerry because he roared down with his engine full out. It was a grand fight, after seeing that I don't mind paying another ½d on fags.

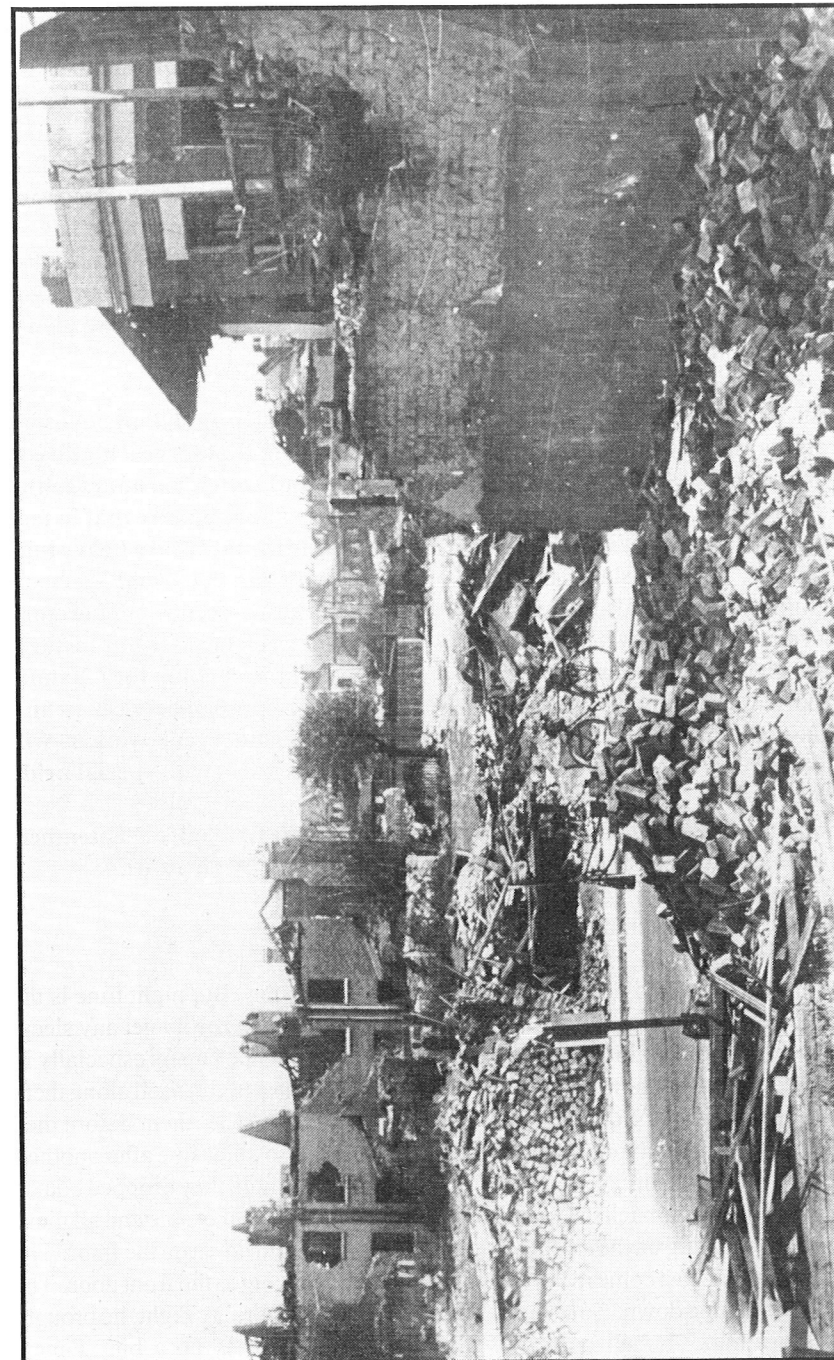
On Saturday I had to take cover again in an alleyway between two houses in Sirdar Road, it was fairly safe, there was a coalman who had just taken his horse out of the cart so we shoved the horse into the alley as well. I didn't see that fight but when we came out I saw one of the jerrys who had bailed out floating down and wished I had a rifle. I haven't heard where he came down."

[Monday. From Mum] "Just a hurried note. 2 more air raids today, 8.10 this morning till 5 to 9. Then again 4.25 till 5 to 6. I was just getting washed to go down the PO to draw your money.... So I had to wait until the all clear. You see the shops shut, you cannot get anything even if you are out. Boy and Joan had to stay in school. What a blue pencil nuisance he is. Thank goodness we did have a nights rest."

[From sister Joan] "I am writing to ask if you would like an extra blanket for the winter. I have a lot of wool and I can easily make a number of squares and sew them together and make a blanket for you to keep partly warm for the winter in case it is like last years was.

As I was coming home from school on Friday the warning went so me and Marie Laver was trying to get home when the guns opened fire. As we past one house when a man asked us if we would like to go down his shelter, so we went. While we were down his shelter we thought we heard a screaming bomb but when it was all quiet the man went into the garden and some old lady told him it was a Jerry come down and a rumour went round it came down in Angel Road Edmonton. Well we had 7 warnings yesterday and 3 at night time but we are all OK."

I was due for seven days leave on Monday, 9 September but on the previous Friday intelligence reports indicated large movements of invasion barges in the Channel ports. All German army leave was to be stopped from 8 September and invasion was considered imminent. The defence forces of the United Kingdom on 7 September were ordered to "standby at immediate notice" and at 8.07 G.H.Q Home Forces issued the code word CROMWELL. It was a false alarm but that night the real blitz on London began. By dawn of the 8th. more than 300



Devastation in Cornwall Road, off West Green Road, Tottenham, 1940

Londoners had been killed and 1,337 seriously injured.

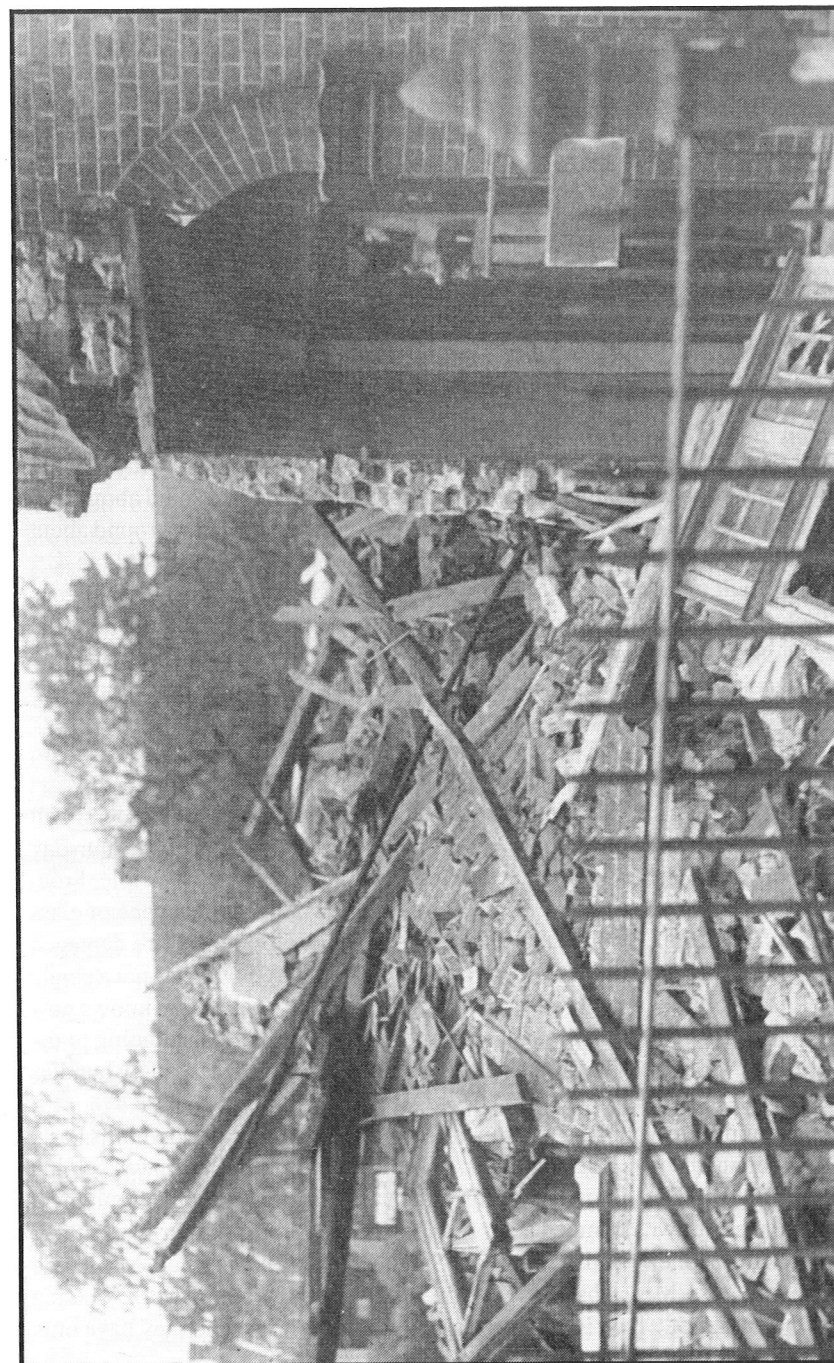
Quoting from my own diary, "All 402 Battery men were recalled from leave by order of the 50th. AA Brigade at 4 a.m. on Sunday morning. In the afternoon all those who had reported back were told they could proceed on leave again. I had a warrant, pass and ration card made out from the Monday but this was cancelled and I received the same for only three days. On Monday I caught the 3.15 from Nottingham. I should have arrived in Kings Cross at 6.30, instead it was 7.15 as the train stopped outside London for a time due to an air raid there. I had just finished having some tea at home when the sirens went, so I spent my first night in an Anderson shelter from 8.30 p.m. until 5.45 a.m." In fact the other two nights were also spent in the shelter.

Churchill broadcast to the nation on 11 September. He said that invasion preparations on a great scale were steadily going forward; that several hundreds of self-propelled barges were moving from German and Dutch harbours to the south. "We cannot tell when they will try to come; we cannot be sure that in fact they will try to come... but no one should blind himself to the fact that a heavy full-scale invasion of this Island is being prepared with all the usual German thoroughness and method and that it may be launched any time now.... Therefore we must regard the next week or so as a very important week for us in our history. It ranks with the days when the Spanish Armada was approaching the Channel and Drake was finishing his game of bowls; or when Nelson stood between us and Napoleon's Grand Army at Boulogne.... Every man and every woman will therefore prepare himself to do his duty, whatever it may be, with special pride and care."

On 17 September Churchill told the House that during the first half of September, 2,000 civilians had been killed and about 8,000 wounded by air raids.

"Wednesday, 18th. September 1940"

"We are having a raid now and this is the 6th today so far. But night time is the worst. The guns and barrage is awful. I hear it all night we can hardly get any sleep. They have done a terrible lot of damage as I expect you see in the papers especially in the West End. Dad says they dropped them in Wood Green last night, 5, all along there by the Green Stores and Woolworths but they managed to smother them before they set fire. We cannot go out for a bit of shopping. They come so quick one after another. I must tell you that Grannie is up here with us. Last Thursday night they dropped bombs on Fore Street just at the back of Grannies. It knocked her across the table and all those photos she has standing on the sideboard and piano, it sent them down on the floor. The man downstairs had just come in the back door, it sent him flying to the front door. The scullery ceiling came down. So when dad fetched her money Friday night, he brought her back with him. I shall be thankful when these raids ease up a bit. Fancy,



Registrar for Births and Deaths in the High Road, opposite the Central Library

Buckingham Palace has caught it.... The all clear has just gone.

We had our dinner and tea in the shelter while you were at home, this morning we had our breakfast down there. We shall soon live there altogether. The raid last night lasted from 10 past 8 till 10 to 6 this morning. Then he had the cheek to come back again at ¼ past 7. Just received your letter - 5.30 Wed. - another warning - that's 8.

We are getting quite used to gunfire now. Boy and Joan and I saw shells bursting in the sky. Boy wears the tin hat. Joan's school at Risley Avenue has a time bomb in it so she cannot go to school, in fact, none of the children are at school."

My grandmother occupied the top half of a house in Snells Park, Edmonton. Her sideboard survived, it is now in my possession!

"Tuesday, 24th. September 1940"

"I am writing this now but cannot say when I shall finish as we are all ready waiting for the usual sound about this time.... It goes earlier than ever now. Round about 7.30 to 8 o'clock. We had no raids Sunday until halfway through our dinner - round about 2.30. We carried on with our dinners. The all clear did not go until about ¼ to 4.... Blow me about half an hour afterwards I was talking to Mrs Laver when a bang goes off. We look round, everybody runs out, Dad and Boy shoot out of the shelter. All of a sudden a plane appeared out of the clouds and started machine gunning.... Then the sirens go again. We had a laugh afterwards. But it was a to-do all of a sudden. The warning goes again till about 5.30 next morning. But last night was a real night.... They dropped bombs all round us. We had 2 warnings this morning but never heard anything so we just carry on. WARNING. Cheerio [will] finish this tomorrow.

Well Tom we have just survived another air raid. Banging and bombing nearly all night. We don't yet know what damage has been done. Last Wednesday or Thursday he dropped bombs at Bruce Grove. I have not seen it but they say it is terrible. From the shops in Lordship Lane up to the High Cross there is not one whole pane of glass left. Marks & Spencers, Woolworths and all those shops along there are damaged more or less, the small shops are down and a place called Stony South has not a single brick left. It is absolutely flat. Patiences lived in Stony South so heaven knows how they got on. Mrs Laver saw it and saw some of the people who escaped going to the Town Hall. They looked awful, some had cuts bleeding in their faces, a few bundles in their arms or in prams.

A bomb was dropped on a public shelter in the Recreation Ground in Downhills Park. They say that about 300 have lost their lives. Warren on the Corner House was helping to get people out. But Dad has not seen him to hear much about it. Mills Equipment down Broad Lane is down. Bombed and set on fire. Mrs. Lenny's sister works there and was sent home Monday so that happened Sunday night. That is where Mrs. Budd and Florrie work, also Mrs. Abson so I suppose they are now out of work. The big brewery at the corner of Clyde Road near the Town Hall is down and they have only

just finished rebuilding it. There seems to be bombs dropped everywhere. The SW seems to get a lot of it too, that is where Uncle Fred lives....

Well Son we have found a large lump of shrapnel in the garden by the greenhouse. Joan found it yesterday morning. A piece about the size of an egg but a bit heavier. It is a nasty shape. Thank God it never hit anyone. I expect there is some more if we had a real search all amongst the cabbages and cauliflowers. So we have something to keep in memory of the war, as if we are ever likely to forget it....

What do you think of the sinking of the ship on its way to Canada. It is really too wicked for words. Poor little children, done no wrong to anyone, yet to meet a death like that. We are told not to put our whole trust in God. It makes one wonder whether there is a God above if he allows things like that to happen. I hear on the news this morning that Berlin has been bombed again. So it ought to be. They ought to smash it completely so that not 2 bricks are left standing or a person left living. We are certainly smashing up his invasion ports and planes. That is making old Hitler wild. It is not so easy as he thought.

Boy and Joan have gone to school now. They have been away such a lot lately. They are better at school. I am waiting for Grannie to get up for her breakfast as she always goes to bed for a while after we come out of the shelter.... We never hear the news or anything on the wireless now as the old buzzer goes so early. We hoped to hear *Pig and Whistle* last night but couldn't.... I think I will go and turn the bedroom [i.e. the shelter] out, put the bedding out in the garden to air in case we have to make it into a sitting room during the day. It is a lovely sunny morning but a cold wind blowing. A lot of children are being evacuated again. Potters went yesterday I hear Rusts and Priors are going soon. I wonder what to do about Joan and Boy. It is so hard to decide. Do you know I only had to make the bed twice last week and I made them Sunday (as we had a lay in) and nobody has slept in them since. We mostly turn in about 9.30 to 10 in the shelter. Make ourselves comfortable and shut our earoles up to get some sleep. It is not too bad down there if we had a few more inches. Boys got such a fat bum that he wants such a lot of room...."

[From Dad] "I can't stop to write much as I was late in, had a very heavy delivery and have soon to go back. Last night they brought three houses down and damaged several more in Mayes Road, hit Barratts the sweet factory killing 3, a house in Barratts Avenue, one in Braemar Avenue Wood Green, set fire to the school in Lordship Lane. Hope you will soon have your other four days so you can hear and see our firework display."

The ship was the *City of Benares* which was torpedoed and sunk by a submarine when taking children to Canada on 17 September.

"Wednesday, 2nd. October 1940"

"I may not finish this tonight but will carry on as long as I can before the buzzer

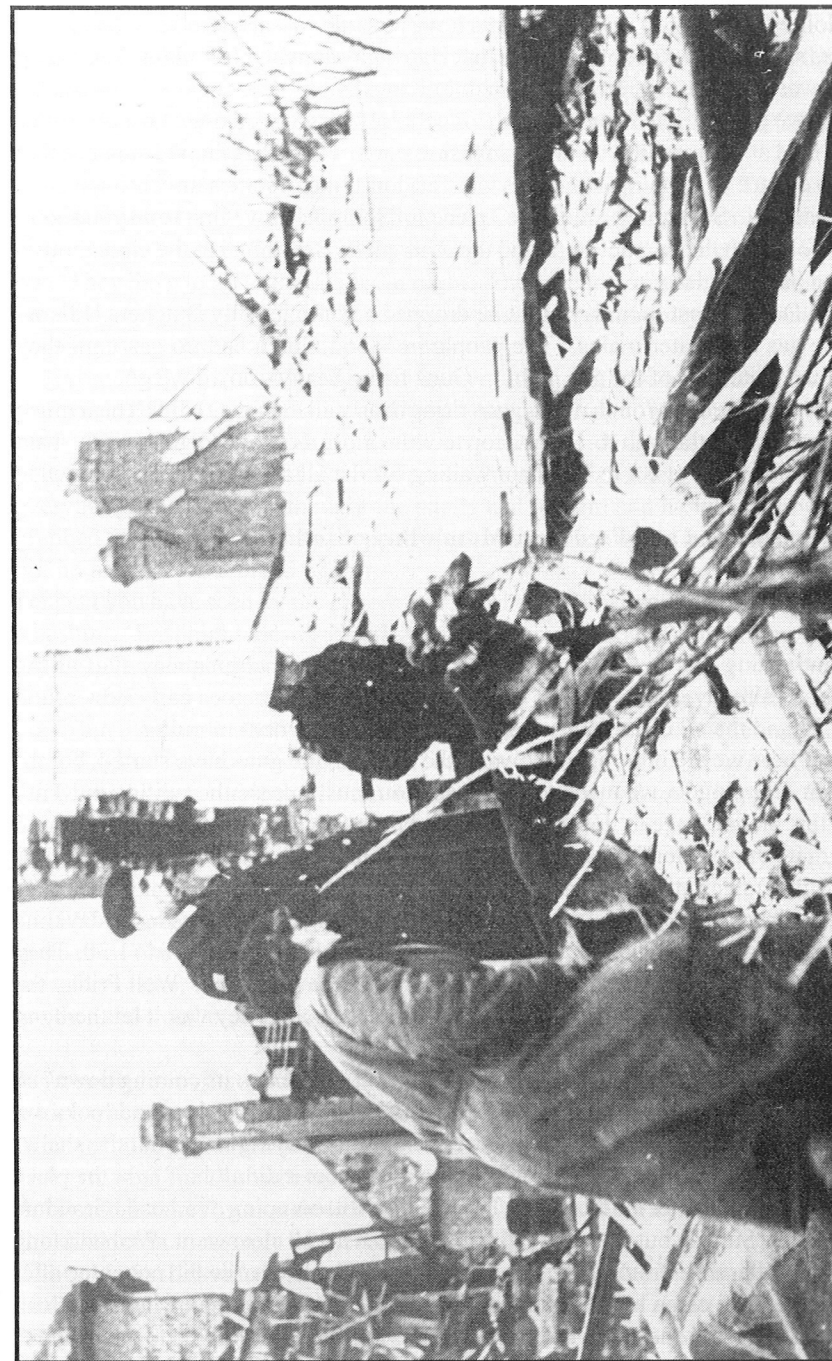
goes. Dad is on different duties now.... He is late today, and I do hope he will have time to have his dinner before the warning goes. He only just got in Monday night, he had to eat his pudding in the bedroom. We have had 6 warnings today from 9 o'clock this morning until 5 o'clock this afternoon but we haven't heard anything so we just carry on. I do wish he would give us a night off. *Garrison Theatre* is on tonight but I bet we won't hear it. The raids are not quite so noisy these last few nights....

One night last week, Thursday I believe, we thought it was all up. We shook in the shelter. Such a crash, we heard next day they dropped a bomb outside the White Hart Inn. Of course that is only at the back of us. 2 houses down in Mayfair Gardens (next to Devonshire Hill Lane). That was an awful night that was. Several shops in Dolly's firm is down. More bombs in Fore Street. Time bombs all around the Roundway and Lordship Lane....

Uncle Charlie came over Sunday morning. We did feel sorry for him. Auntie Kate and the 2 children have gone away down to Morecambe where Joan [a cousin] is. It got too bad for them to stay. He said Brian was getting frightened and unnerved. A mine bomb went off there one day and scared everybody, 2 houses down in Duncombe Road where they live. All around them any amount of damage. All down Holloway Road, Seven Sisters Road, shops down, windows out. He said it was quite a treat to come over here and see houses standing and no windows broken. but it does seem hard for him. First Joan going away, [then] last Thursday they came over and bombed his firm at Watford with fire bombs. They had got the flames under control when they came back again at 5 o'clock in the morning and bombed it again. Consequence now he is out of work., and then Auntie Kate going away. They will get some rest and of course it is beginning to get cold in the shelter now. Uncle Ted has not got any windows left in his house - WARNING and Dad not home yet - Dad just come in.

The warning went at 10 to 8. So while the others get Grannie down the shelter I make Dad a cup of tea while Dad has a wash. Then the guns start. So I put Dad's dinner on the tray and take it down to the bedroom. But all is quiet. Dad has his feed. We bring the tray up. I cut Dad's food off ready for the morning as he has to be on at 6. While doing that Dad says "Hurry up, there's a plane up" so off we trot down the hole again. Sit there, all is quiet until 10 past 9 then all clear goes. What a game, so we have come up again and am waiting for the next call. We feel we can't go to bed yet. I reckon he does it on purpose so we should not hear Jack Warner.

I will continue with the news. Uncle Ted had a bomb drop on the house opposite him and smashed all his windows. Auntie Win was thrown out of bed and lay paralysed for some time with shock. Uncle Ted had not been to work last week owing to a time bomb in his place. Aunt Dorothy was out shopping one day when they started machine gunning people. Some man shouted "Throw yourself down Missus". She didn't quite get the idea for a minute but as she saw everyone laying flat on the pavement she done the same so was OK. Uncle Fred got caught one night in the West End in a raid. He thought his last his last hour was up. Bombs dropped round his bus. The driver took to the wheel and round all the back doubles and drove like mad and didn't stop till he



Dogs were used to search wreckage for survivors

got to Holloway Garage. By all accounts it was awful. We seem to have had it bad but others seem to be worse. Dad heard that Harringay caught it last night. Harringay Stadium was hit, no trains can get through to Kings X.

Well dear we did hear the King's speech. It certainly was a good one. I bet old Hitler aint half mad at us smashing up all his invasion ports. He realizes now I suppose that he has no chance of winning and that is what he don't like. We certainly brought a lot of planes down in September. We have 3 pieces of Shrapnel now. One I told you about, 1 piece I found on the dug out steps and the other piece Boy found in the Greenhouse. It broke a pane of glass."

[From Dad] "Last Saturday night he dropped a bomb in Jolly Butchers Hill and broke the gas and water mains. The people in Wood Green had no gas until they pumped the water out of the gas main. - Guns firing heavy - down we go. Well Tom we have had a rough night, guns firing nearly all the time. I didn't hear much because I can sleep through it. I can't stop to write more as I have to go to work. I am supposed to be there at 6 a.m. but I am waiting for the all clear and it's 6.20 now."

Uncles Charlie, Ted and Fred were Mum's three brothers.

"Wednesday, 9th. October 1940"

"I am writing this in the kitchen but any minute now the guns may start as the warning has already gone some 10 minutes ago. The buzzer goes early now round about 7.30 and the all clear does not go until 6.30 to 7 the next morning.

Well Tom here we are once again down in the dug out, the guns have started, bombs have been dropping so we made a mad dash, you must excuse the writing but I am writing this on one knee.... He dropped some bombs not far away last night. Wood Green got it I think. Monday night was a terrible night. Nobody could (BOMP BOMP these are guns) sleep at all. We have had 2 day warnings, we heard (Grannie and I) guns and bombs dropping. But we just carry on. We are getting used to guns in the day time now. Last Friday was a bit hot. Boy and Joan go to school now from 9.30 to 1.30. They have to take a sandwich with them. They don't go in the afternoon. Well Friday the poor kids did not come home for their dinner till 6 o'clock. They won't let them out of school while there is a raid on.

Just had a bit excitement. We heard voices saying "Look. Look its coming down" so we sit looking at each other like a lot of silly xxx. Dad opens the door and looks out "Phew look at this". Of course we fall over one another trying to get out the shelter and we see 5 flares dropping down over Edmonton. I bet it didn't half light the place up. I expect they are after the factories. The guns are still bombing overhead. Grandma came over last Sunday but she went at 6 o'clock when the all clear went. We had a long raid Sunday afternoon from 2.30 till 6, guns as well. Uncle Charlie did not come after all as Auntie Kate came home Saturday. She was staying at the same house as Joan but the landlady said she could not stop longer as she was not allowed to take anyone

in only Civil Servants and if the landlord knew there were children in the house she would get into trouble. Auntie Kate tried hard to get somewhere else but they were all asking £3.3.0d a week and of course she couldn't do that. The woman wouldn't sign a billeting paper otherwise Auntie Kate could have seen the Billeting Officer. She would also have been allowed 11s. a week towards their keep....

Grandma said the damage down round Holloway was awful. Uncle Ted cannot stay in their house at night nor in the daytime if there are guns going. The windows are all out, even the window frames, all the ceilings down, the back of the house is bulging out. They have to go to the shelter at night. They are looking for another house. So we are best off after all Albert came over last Sunday morning and I think Grannie is going over there next Sunday for a month."

[From Dad] "Oh it's a lovely war. I am enjoying it, it's better than the last. Fancy front line and able to come home and have a nice hot dinner. What more could anyone want. We are down the old dug out with Jerry on a joy ride and the guns playing merry hell, it's a lovely sound just like old times. The other night there was a loud bang and everything was lit red. I thought the shells had hit him and he was bailing out so I grabbed the old pig sticker and hopped out thinking there would be a chance of a scrap but no luck, it was a bread basket.

I expect you have seen by the papers and heard the radio that London has had a bit of a bashing. Last night they dropped them on Finsbury Park Station hitting two trains killing a few people and some in Tottenham and Wood Green. There are about thirty houses damaged so badly in Sirdar and Crawley Roads that they will have to come down but the people who were living in them are very cheerful considering, they have hung flags out to show their contempt for Jerry. I had to smile just now, things were fairly quiet when suddenly the naval guns opened fire, your Mother and the others nearly jumped out of their skins. I have been lucky with the greenhouse so far only one pane cracked but I mustn't shout. I am going to alter it and try to get some chickens."

"PS" [From Mum] "Here we are once again all merry and bright. Just had another night raid. The all clear did not go until 5 past 7. Just after Dad had finished your letter he said "Listen, Bomb coming down". Crash, where it dropped don't know, then another and another, 5 altogether."

My cousin Joan, just younger than I am, worked for the Post Office Savings Bank which was evacuated to the North. She lodged in a boarding house at Morecambe. Most of the seaside boarding houses and hotels were requisitioned by the Government for the various departments.

A "bread-basket" was a device which exploded on the way down and showered the district in a cascade of incendiary bombs.

"The old pig sticker" was an obsolete army bayonet which Dad had - issued about 1885 and with a long blade of 21 inches - not a pleasant sight!

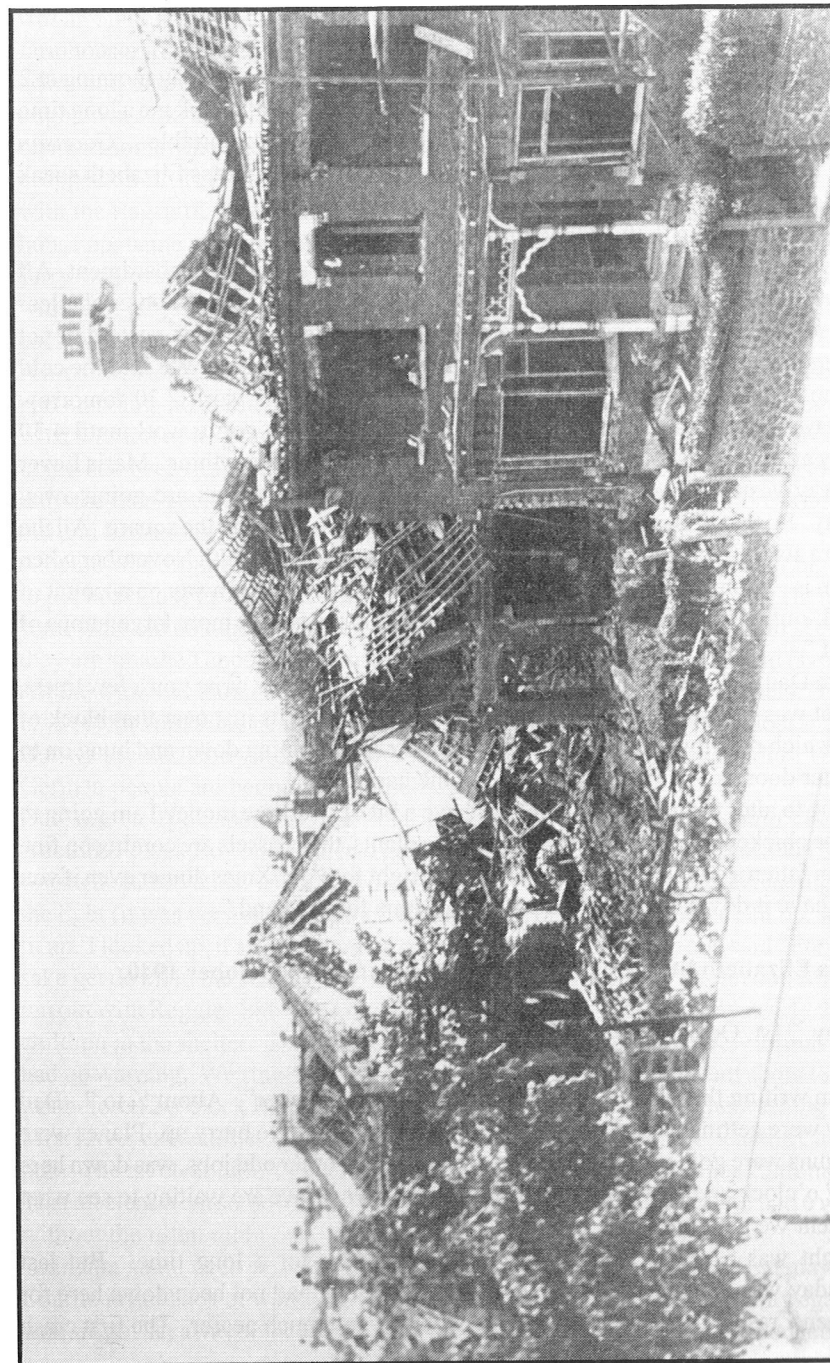
Naval guns were mounted on vehicles and moved up and down the Cambridge

Road near to our house. When they opened up nearby the place shook.
"Tuesday, 15th. October 1940"

"I expect before long we shall have to make a dash for it. Well Tom talk about excitement. We all thought our number was up last night. the siren had gone, we were all ready to get down below, we were in the kitchen (Grannie went over to Alberts last Friday). I told them to come on, Dad said "yes he is up above us", Dolly said "lets finish this now" (she was knitting). I said "never mind about that, come on". So we went, we had just got in the shelter when crash, the shelter shook, Dad was just shutting the shelter door when he shouted "Duck down". He ducked down too hanging on to the door when [with] another crash and fire, the house and greenhouse was alight, not really but it looked so. The first one fell in Acacia Avenue (the other side of the church) the second one in White Hart Lane just this side of the wardens post. They were both fire bombs. That made it look as though everything was on fire. Both fell in the road and done no damage, only to the road, no one was hurt. But oh Tom it was awful as we looked out the top of the shelter door, we all thought our home had gone. Dad admits he thought the place was on fire. My poor legs and knees still knock when I think of it.

We were under fire as Dad says for about 2 hours. The guns were going, we could hear more bombs a little further away being dropped. The warning went at 5 past 7 and the all clear at about early 6 this morning. It really was a terrible night. A time bomb went off this afternoon in Jellicoe Road. Shook the place. We have had no water to day, [but] (Guns have just started and no warning yet.) what we have in the hot water tank. Just made a dash for it. Guns and Whistles, people shouting "Take Cover" all before the sirens go. So we stopped for nothing just grabbed our things and here we are once again. The time is 7.35. Will tell you in the morning what time the all clear goes. Now to continue (BOMP BOMP). We have only the water that is in the hot water tank so we have had to go careful and not use too much.... I would not have a fire although it has been chilly so afraid of the tank running dry and bursting. We don't want that mess. We are not the only ones without water. (The blooming guns aren't half going it). Joan said everybody on the estate is without water. We don't know about that but nobody in the square has any water. So I suppose it is a main burst somewhere. Dolly heard today that bombs were dropped in Philip Lane and High Road last night. Dad hasn't been out today. He is on a weeks holiday (don't laugh) so we haven't heard where they dropped....

Did you see in the paper the other day, one day last week a bus was hit by a bomb in the City. Well I'm sorry to tell you that the driver was killed and it was Mr. Pavelin you remember who used to live at No.4. Poor Mrs. Pavelin with all that family, only 2 at work. We heard about it Sunday and hoped it wasn't true but Dad saw Tommy Prior on Monday and he delivers milk at Pavelins house. When they left here they were living at Braintree in Essex. They were bombed there, so moved up here to Park Lane. They had not been there long before an incendiary bomb fell on the house so they



Thought to be Lordsmead Road, near Bruce Grove, Tottenham

moved into the next turning and now the poor man has been killed, so the war was meant to hit them one way or another. He was only young too....

Oh I must tell you the all clear went early on Saturday or rather Sunday morning at 2 o'clock so we went upstairs to BED first time for a fortnight but it took me a long time to go to sleep. It seemed so strange but it was good to be so comfortable.... *Garrison Theatre* is on Saturday. Hope we can hear it., Did you hear Princess Elizabeth speak on Sunday. Wasn't it nice."

"Wednesday morning 7.30. Good morning.

Here we are once again all alive and kicking after another all night bombardment. All clear went at 5.30, soon after, another bombing started. Dad heard another all clear at 6.30 so when the warning went we don't know. We had 7 raids yesterday not including the night one. I wonder how many we shall have today. We find the cold water tap is running a little so hope it is OK. Dolly starts work 7.30 tomorrow (Thursday) ½ hour earlier than she has been doing and has got to work until 4.30 Saturday afternoon. So she won't have much time at home for anything. Maria Laver went away yesterday to Wales same house as John is in. Priors are going away Thursday. So that will only leave Boy, Joan and the girls Wests in the square. All the others are away. Not Mrs. Lennys. Joan leaves school about the 7th November when half term is. I don't know where she will work. She can't go far away on account of the black-out.... I'm going to have a look to see if I can find any more large lumps of shrapnel."

[From Dad] "Having crept out of our rabbit hole I will now write you a few lines., Well that was an oil bomb, it burst about fifty yards from us just near that block of houses which runs towards White Hart Lane. I heard it coming down and hung on to the shelter door as I hadn't had time to put the bar across....

I'm going to alter the greenhouse and as I have a bit of overtime money I am going to buy some chickens. I am putting in 50 cabbage plants, the brussels are coming on fine so if I can fatten a couple of cocks you will be alright for your Xmas dinner even if you have to have it down the rabbit hole with the guns for the band."

Princess Elizabeth broadcast in Childrens' Hour on 13 October 1940.

"Monday, 21st. October 1940".

"I am writing this as usual in "Our little Anderson Shelter". About ¼ to 7. Dad and Boy were getting it ready for the night when they told us to hurry up. Planes were up and guns were going. So we had a mad wash up and other odd jobs, was down here before 7 o'clock and no warning until 10 past 7. So now we are waiting to see what excitement we get tonight.

Last night was a real bombardment. Heavy gunfire for a long time. But last Wednesday was it again. We came down here as usual, had not been down here for long when Crash a few minutes after another crash and much nearer. The first crash

was an oil bomb just the other side of the cemetery park between the park and that old farmhouse. It dropped in the road, knocked a part of the cemetery wall and railings down and of course broke some of those windows in the houses just opposite. You ought to see the mess it makes on the road, all black oil over the hedges. The second one was somewhere nearer. The house on the corner of White Hart Lane had a bomb dropped on it. Talk about a fire. You know opposite the Express Dairy. The house with the flagstaff. The man works on the council, a jolly fat old boy, helped do our house up, name of Wood. We looked out of the shelter....It lit up the place for miles. Jerry was overhead, the guns were going like mad, it was absolutely teeming down with rain, [so] that we could not go out to see really where it was. The bomb hit the back of the house, all those in the first square in White Hart Lane caught all the blast. A lot of windows broken and tiles off. It is nearly down to the ground, only the bottom part standing, no doors or windows left. The council have cleared all his home out or what was left of it. The warning did not go until after 7 that night and by ½ past 7 the bomb had been dropped on it. They were all in the house but all managed to get out, only the man got slightly burned on his neck. While Dolly had her breakfast I went out and had a look. The roof was all in and it was still smouldering.

A bomb was dropped in the High Road opposite Spurs. There is a crater big enough to put this house in. You remember the Catholic Church on the corner. Then there is some little old cottages with their shelters in the front garden, you should see the way they are smashed about. The crater is just in front of them. Half the road is roped off. All the windows along the High Road are broken from Wests the butchers. The glass is swept into piles and heaps along the road just like they sweep up the dust and leaves. But we are not worrying. Old Hitler had a good bashing last night didn't he. The German people are beginning to think and wonder.

But I must tell you about this morning. It has been a wet, miserable, damp, cloudy day. About 9 o'clock Boy and Joan had gone to school. There was only Dad and I here, just finished our breakfast when the postman came with your letter. I was reading it when the light (it was very dark as it was raining) went out, lit up, went out, lit up, went out, lit up. I looked up, it all happened so quick. Dad gave me a push and said "For Christ's sake get down in the shelter. He's dropping bombs wholesale". I ran out, Mrs. Laver ran out with Reggie. She came down here with dad and I. Mrs Lenny nearly threw her children in the shelter. The guns opened fire. It was a game for a few minutes but we had no warning. We stopped in here for some time. A warning went about ½ past 10, just before 12 o'clock Bang Crash again. The house shook. I left the washing and run. Mrs. Laver came down again. 3 bombs were dropped somewhere near the Cambridge pub. The all clear didn't go till 10 past 1 o'clock. Another warning 25 minutes to 2. That all clear went somewhere about 4 I think. Yesterday (Sunday) we had 6 warnings without the usual night one.

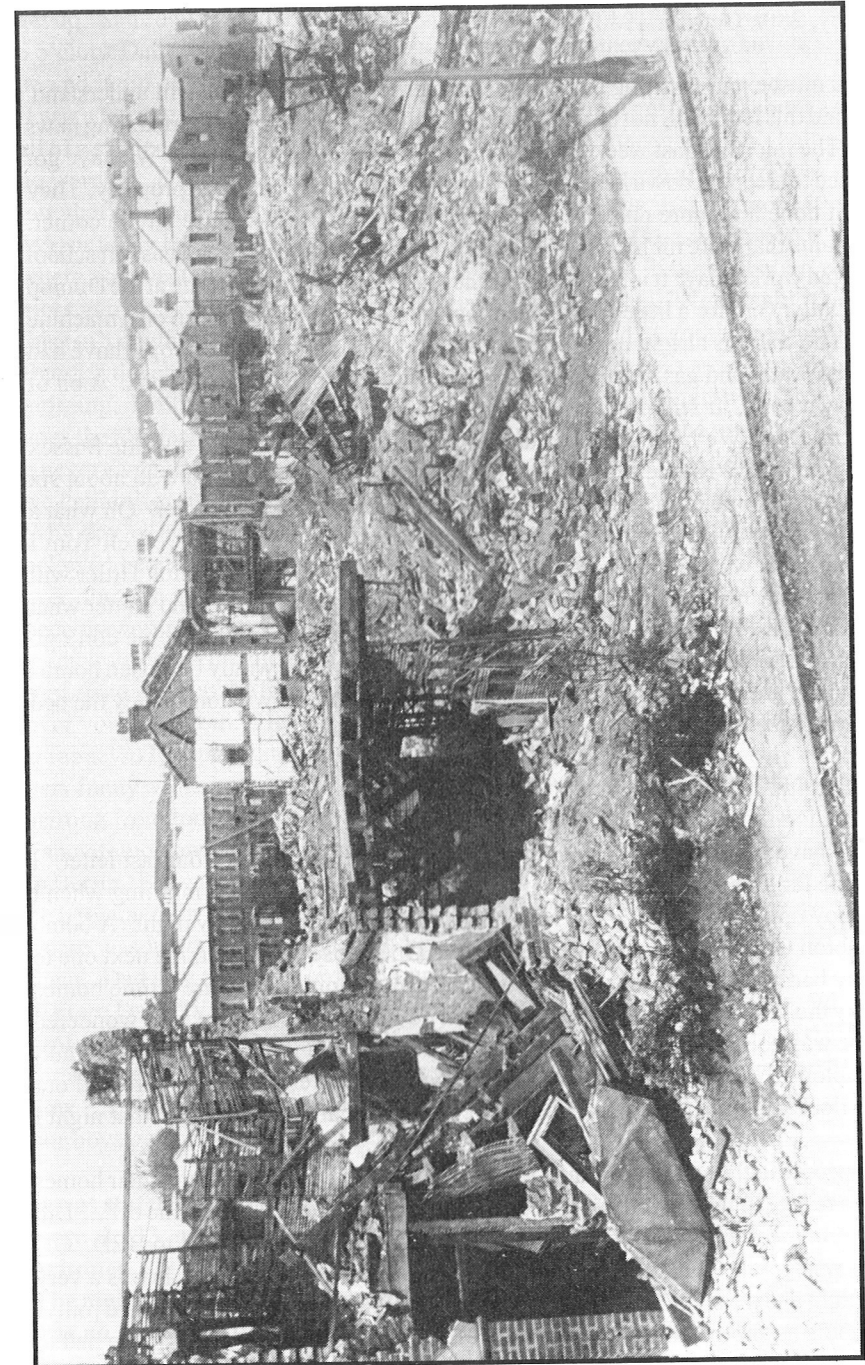
Grandma came over yesterday. I went up there to Holloway last Thursday. Uncle Charlie is not back at work yet. Auntie Kate and the 2 children are away again. The welfare got her away somewhere in Surrey, Farnborough I believe. A good job she was

away I think. On the Monday night when we had bombs around here, Uncle Charlie and Aunt Kate's brother were sitting in his shelter when down comes a bomb, nearly lifts the shelter out of the ground. They walked into the house, out of the front door, when crash another bomb dropped on 3 houses a few doors from Uncle Charlie's house. I saw them. Talk about matchwood. It is dreadful really, some of the furniture standing in the street that they managed to save. Uncle Charlie has nearly all his windows broken.

But we are all merry and bright. Uncle Ted has got a house at Finchley. They had got to get out so I suppose they think they will get right out of Holloway and I don't blame them Well dear Son you mustn't talk about it looks as though you have run away from it. Do you remember the days or rather nights when we were able to go to bed and know that through you we could rest contently. Look at the nights when you were under fire and we were safely in bed. We are not a bit worried. While we have this shelter I feel safe. So do not worry over us. If one comes down Dad has his pig sticker. If Dad is out you remember I told you I have the carving knife all ready. So we are going to see it through without a scratch just to annoy old Hitler. I see in the papers about his invasion on September 16th. Old humbug.... The water is on now but it went off this morning when I was washing. It goes off and on. So we keep 2 big jugfuls in case we get stuck for water. At Holloway they have no gas or water. They have to line up for their water at the turncock...."

[From Dad] "9.15 a.m. Your Mother has told you about the raids on Monday morning. After we heard the second lot of bombs drop I took my old tin hat and went to have a look round and see if I could help. I found that one had dropped in the playground of the Central School on the Weir Hall Estate and busted the water main.... You don't want to think you are out of it because you are not you are only in a fairly quiet part of the line. There were times in the last war when I was in the line when there wasn't a shot or shell fired near us on either side yet on the left and right of us it was Hell let loose, our turn came later so make the best of it while you can.... I have built a blast protection of bricks and earth in front of the door so now we can have the other door open for more air."

The continual night raids on London were causing considerable worry and anxiety among service personnel from London. There were reports of men deserting or going "absent without leave" to return home to their families. The early morning news on the wireless often had the brief announcement that, "Last night there was an eight hour raid on London with widespread damage and casualties. 'X' number of bombers have been shot down." This was no comfort to a man miles away. It must have been in a rather despondent mood after hearing the news at the height of the Blitz that I wrote home suggesting "that I was out of it all". The reply of both Mum and Dad was reassuring and encouraging.



Tewkesbury Road, off Seven Sisters Road

"Monday, 28th. October 1940"

"You must excuse writing but as you can guess where we are you will understand. I am afraid this letter will not be as interesting as the others as we have no exciting news to tell. The raids this last week have been quiet but plenty of gunfire.... We have got quite used to sleeping down here now, but it will be good to get into bed properly. They have not done any more damage round here since they hit the house on the corner. Those trams that were hit by a bomb was at Blackfriars Bridge Joan has left school and started work today. It is half term. So she left Friday. She is working at the Dunlop where Dolly went for a little while. Joan seems to like it OK. Has been on a machine today. The water is alright now, so that is a good job. I know some people have had a job with water and gas also. I see that Berlin has had some good air raids. A bit of [their] own back. It will do them good".

[From Dad]"We have built the run for the chickens. We've got a White Sussex cock, a fine bird, 2 Rhode Island reds and three cross breeds. They are all about six months old so some of them will make a good dinner for Xmas and after. Oh what a lovely war, front line and talking about fattening chickens for Xmas. Well Tom I don't think this war will last much longer, but before he packs up I think Hitler will make a big smash at London. I think he will send every plane he's got no matter what the cost to himself to do as much damage as he can just out of spite. Some don't go into their shelter now they stay indoors. We don't, we are not windy but when bombs and shrapnel are flying about the smallest place is the safest. We don't fancy the bed or the wardrobe clouting us on the ear."

"Monday, 4th. November 1940"

"We have more news this time of bombs and excitement since our last letter. I found one large lump of shrapnel just on the dug out path the other morning when I called Boy up for school. We had rather a warm time on Wednesday night. A bomb in Compton Crescent just opposite the library. One house is just flat, the next one to it is very badly damaged, the people have had to move out. There are 3 time bombs round by the White Hart Inn. But they all came down one after another. We wondered when he was going to stop dropping them. As far as we can find out no one was hurt in Compton Crescent only a dog killed. Of course we were all down here and our shelter floor went up and down. Bombs were dropped all over the place that night I think.

All the people in the squares around Devonshire Hill have had to clear out their homes and take refuge in the church opposite. But Boy says the bombs have gone off.... Did you read in the papers that we had no warning last night. We all went to BED. OH BOY it was good. Thursday night the all clear went about 9 o'clock. It was a very rough night and the shelter was really damp so we decided to go to bed. We had [only] a few hours as another warning went between 3 and 4 in the morning. So we had to

get up. Saturday night the All Clear went about 3 o'clock Sunday morning. So about 5 o'clock Dad and I went to bed. About 7 there was another warning but we never got up and it did not last long.

It was a terrible day yesterday pouring with rain all day and misty. Just about 2 o'clock all of a sudden BOMP BOMP. POP POP POP. OH BOY the guns didn't half go it and no warning. Dad heard today they were over Hornsey Station and the planes were so low that the blooming Germans shook their fists at people in the street. It is in the *Mirror* today but of course it doesn't say where. Dad says Hornsey Station is bombed where you went over when you went to camp. Then again in the afternoon we heard more gunfire. At just after 5 o'clock away goes the warning. We all said "Oh surely this isn't another raid so early". We had a mad run round. I got the bedroom ready. Dad fed the chickens then had to shave and change his clothes as he was on at 6 this morning. Dolly got the tea and done the blackout. Blow me half way through there goes the all clear. So we got tea cleared away and all ready for the night warning. But it never came. It really was an awful night pouring heavens hard and dark. About 10.30 we couldn't wait for him any longer, so we goes to bed."

(Monday) "Just after 6 we were all having tea, the news was on when Dolly said "I believe I heard guns", she no sooner said it than BOMP BOMP BOMP the house and everything in it shook. We left our tea and made a dash for down below. There had been no warning. After a time we go up and finish tea. I had not finished washing up when away goes the old buzzer.... On Saturday I discovered there was a hole in the roof. Dad went up the loft and found there were 2 holes one over our bedroom and one over your bedroom. He also found a piece of tile in the loft but no large lumps of shrapnel so I suppose Gunfire done it.... Very glad to hear you are getting more money, very funny we heard this morning that we have got another 1s. increase on your pension starting from today....

Fancy tomorrow being Guy Fawks day. I hope they do give them a firework display in Berlin. But we have done a lot over there and also Hitler will find he has more than he bargained for by invading Greece I think. Let's hope it will finish all the quicker. There was hundreds of soldiers and guns by here this morning. Lorry after lorry of them. Dad saw them in Lordship Lane"

[From Dad] "Very pleased to hear you are quite well. Oh what an army. 9d. per day proficiency pay after twelve months, why I had to do two years and be a first class shot for a tanner a day but I am very pleased you are getting it, will you get the SP badge now ?.... Well Greece is putting up a jolly good show against the Talianos and when our boys get going with them I think it will soon finish...."

It was stated on 3 November that German air losses in the previous three months were 2,433 machines destroyed and 6,000 German airmen killed or taken prisoner.

The night of 3 November was also the first night for nearly two months when there was no air raid. Mum's letter explains what a terrible night it was weatherwise.

"Sunday, 10th. November 1940".

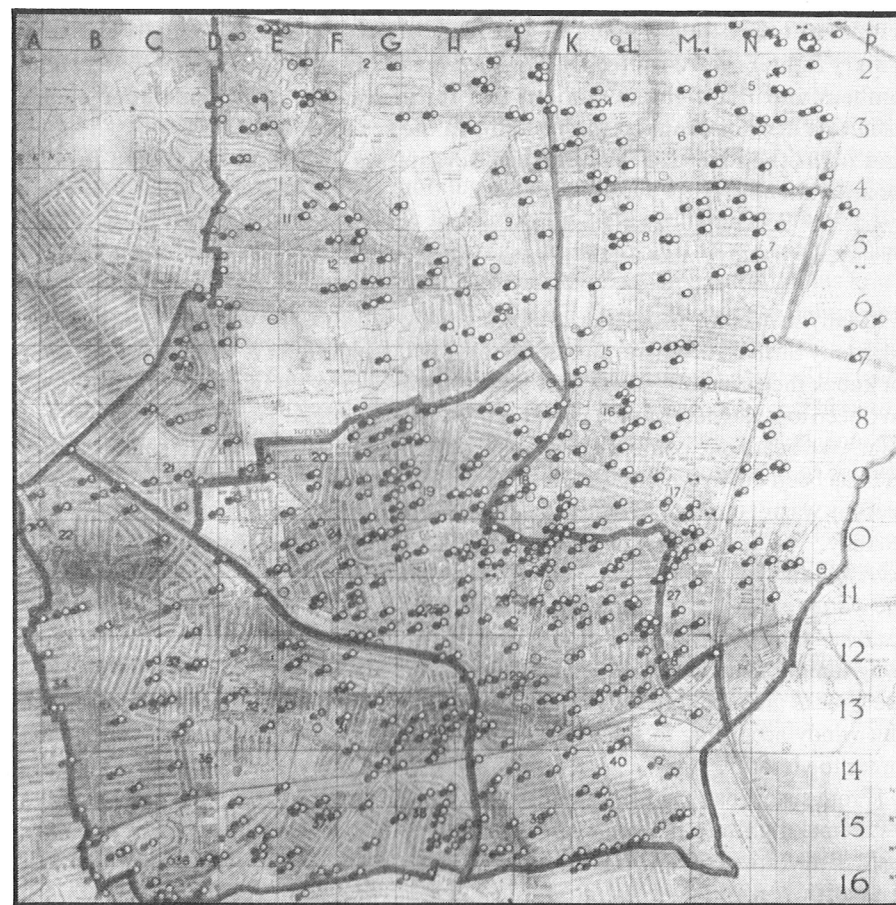
"I'm afraid we are not going to get a night off tonight like we did last Sunday. We have had a very exciting week. How's this - 5 large lumps all the same day, 3 inside the back gate and in front of the bathroom drain, 1 piece on the shelter and 1 piece on front of the front door by the lilac bushes. It sounds as if we shall find some more in the morning. They are certainly doing a lot of damage all over London. But not as much as we are doing in Berlin and Germany. I heard on the Wireless tonight that 6 planes were all ready to start for England when our planes went over and set fire to the lot.

Dad saw Lill Clow who lives in Wood Green somewhere. She said Wards Stores on the corner of Seven Sisters have caught a packet also Tottenham Hospital and the Jews Hospital. Last Monday night he dropped bombs in Harringay and St. Anne's Road. Tuesday night the warning went at 6.20 and the all clear did not go until 8.15 the next morning. We wondered whether they had forgotten to put the all clear out. There was some heavy gunfire between 7.30 and 8 o'clock on the Wednesday morning. Joan was going to work and she had to dive in an alleyway twice.

But Wednesday was a real night. The warning went at 6.20, the all clear went 7.50. Don't we have some long raids now. He dropped bombs on the Roundway, 2 houses down just along where the buses go before they turn round towards our way, a school was hit in Lordship Lane, 2 houses were hit in Mayfair Gardens. One of them is where Mr. Wood lives who collects the rent. Bombs dropped on the cemetery and next to the Dunlop where Joan works. It was a paper factory and talk about fire. It didn't half light the place up all round. It was early morning when he dropped them. I wasn't asleep just sort of half sitting up stretching my legs and my head against the shelter. When it dropped my head went bang against the wall with the vibration. Dad went out to see what had happened.

Thursday night the warning went at 7 o'clock and ended at 10 past 3. There was heavy gunfire at first and then all was quiet. Friday the warning went at 6.20 and the all clear 6.45 Saturday morning. It was Friday night that the bombs fell on Wards, Tottenham Hospital and the Jews Hospital. Saturday morning about 10.30 bombs were dropped on Kings Cross Offices but there was no warning. On Saturday night [there was] heavy gunfire, bombs dropped at Potters Bar, Barnet and Whetstone. 2 cows were killed in a field. Dad has been over to Albert's today to fetch Grannie back....Jerry is over here all right tonight. We have heard some bombs drop.

Well Son you will soon be able to pack your kit-bag blindfolded. I hope you will be OK where you are now. I should think it is a big house by the name of it.... Did you hear *Garrison Theatre* this week. We did not. Uncle Charlie said it was very bad Saturday night kept going off and on. So I suppose they could not take a recording of it I expect you have heard that Chamberlain has passed away. Poor old chap. I fancy it broke him when he found that old Hitler was going to make war after him flying all the way to Munich to make peace. He is now at rest though...."



Civil Defence map of Tottenham. There are 608 reported incidents on it, but it does not show each and every bomb

[From Dad] "We have got through another night. It was a bit hot at times. We haven't heard yet where he dropped them but we heard some coming down. That fire last week at the paper works was a proper blaze. I could see it from the Cambridge Road...."

Neville Chamberlain died on 10 November 1940.

On 11 November the Italian Air Force made their first large scale raid against Britain over the Thames Estuary. Between fifteen and twenty bombers escorted by sixty fighters were routed by two Hurricane squadrons who shot down eight bombers and five fighters without loss to themselves. The remainder of the Italian formation dropped their bombs in the sea and fled.

That night the Fleet Air Arm made a devastating attack on the Italian fleet in Taranto harbour.

"Friday, 15th. November 1940"

"Many thanks for your letter received yesterday afternoon with the good news of 'Mind my Stripe'.... When you come home I will see the door is wide open so you do not knock the stripe off. Well Tom we are down here again but so far this week we have been to bed twice, Monday night and Wednesday night. But tonight is very noisy so far. We heard one bomb come down a few minutes ago. Didn't half sound bad but Dad has been down the bottom of the square but cannot see anything.

Tuesday wasn't too bad. Wednesday it rained again but not such a wild night as it was Monday. We had to come down here for a little but the all clear went about 20 to 10 so we had another night in bed. Last night was rather noisy. All night guns were going. The warning tonight went at ¼ past 6 o'clock, it was quiet at first. Dad came in about 7 and had time to have his tea before we came down here but there are plenty of guns firing tonight and we have heard one bomb come down.

The Greeks are certainly standing up well and I think old Musso is beginning to get a bit windy according to some bit I read, it appears that we have already turned the corner to victory".

[From sister Joan] "I like my work very well. Tomorrow (Saturday) I might have to start making Khaki uniforms (or rather parts of it) so if at any time your tunic comes unstitched you can say "This is the tunic my sister made".... mind you don't knock that stripe off when you go to the pub."

"PS We are down the shelter (as usual) and the guns are going like hell."

"Sunday, 24th. November 1940"

"The warning has gone.... We are not able to go down the shelter now as it is so wet. I don't think there are many people who can use them now. Last Saturday night it was pouring with rain, we went down as usual. The all clear went about 4 Sunday morning. Soon after that Dad and I woke up and the rain was dripping through on us

so we had to come out of it. We came indoors intending to go to bed. But as we were all cold we made a pot of tea, while we were having it another warning went, so we did not care about going upstairs.... We lit the oil lamp, sat round in a ring, put the light out and we all went to sleep until about 7 o'clock.... Dad had a good look round the shelter Sunday morning and the bedding was soaked top and bottom. He found water laying in the bottom. He mopped it up several times but it kept running in again.... Dad brought [down] our bed and spring, not the bedstead itself and we sleep on the front room floor now. We have been more comfortable and warmer than in the shelter. We must just chance our luck.

Things have been rather quiet lately since that Friday night. There have not been many bombs round here and we haven't hear much gunfire. Last night the warning went just after 8 and the all clear about 7 this morning but nobody heard a sound. Of course if it gets very hot we shall have to use the shelter just for a little while. The other Friday they dropped a land mine in Enfield, that was the big explosion that we heard. There are about 800 houses and flats damaged. Brown, our coalman has lost all his home except just a few odds and ends, also his Mother and Father's home has gone. That was a terrible raid on Coventry. They are up in the Midlands more now. Uncle Charlie has started work. Down Highbury. Some Bookbinding firm has got nearly all the work that should have been done at Watford. Funny isn't it. But it will only cost him 4d a day fare instead of 1s.8d. He will also get the London rate of pay.... Well Tom the Greeks have certainly given the old Taliarnos one and we have done a lot of damage out there too"

[From Dad] "I have just been listening to the news. Haven't the RAF bashed Germany and Italy. That's the stuff to give 'em. The Greeks are making them sit up. If we can only keep bashing the Taliarnos they will soon pack up."

The terrible raid on Coventry on 14 November resulted in 507 being killed and more than 420 seriously injured. There was a full moon and for over eleven hours over 400 bombers came and went.

"Sunday, 1st. December 1940"

"The raids have not been so heavy lately. Last Monday there was no warning at all....Friday was a very noisy night. But the all clear has gone earlier than it used to. Last night we waited until ¼ to 11, no warning so we said we would go to bed.... Dad thought he heard guns. He listens, then he hears a plane go over, a minute after that the warning goes, it only lasted ¼ of an hour. So we had a good nights rest. It is comfortable in the bed on the floor.... We have had 3 warnings today.... (and a short one in the evening) so if we don't have any more we shall trip upstairs again tonight I hope. It is very cold and foggy now....and a white frost everywhere.... You have certainly been having excitement up your way.

Old Musso "aren't alf" copping a packet now isn't he. Serve him right. He should have

kept his nose out of it. The Greeks have captured another big town I hear. Old Hitler is certainly quiet. I expect he is planning something. According to the forecast in *News of the World*, Hitler's downfall starts within a year.... I am very glad you are getting your money OK. We have not heard anything about an extra 1s.9d. a week or any back money. It will help buy a few things towards Xmas.... Did you hear *Garrison Theatre* last night. It was the last performance for some time."

[From Dad] "The other night was bit hot. We've got a big gun near us, when that starts it shakes the windows and you can hear the shells going up and you will no doubt hear it when you come home, when that gun opens fire Jerry nearly always drops his load and we get the S— Boy has just gone to bed upstairs and we were thinking of going when up goes old Wailing Willie so I suppose we shall have to kip down in the front room."

"Monday Morning" [From Mum] "We were not able to go upstairs to bed as we had hoped.... there was heavy gunfire for sometime. But I think the all clear went early morning. I hear on the wireless the Germans lost 8 planes yesterday. That's good. Didn't Southampton have a terrible raid the other night."

Southampton had a severe raid on 30 November.

"Wednesday, 18th. December 1940"

"I am writing this while Joan has her breakfast but will not post it until the postman has been. I am going down to post a parcel off to you as soon as the Post office open. Dad and I done it up last night. I hope you get it before Xmas. It is the best I could do for you. I have walked all over Tottenham to try and get an egg for the Rice cheesecakes or else some Lemon Curd but cannot get either. So I could not make either. I am sorry Tom as I know how fond you are of the cheesecakes. We are not having many air raids just lately. It has been quiet since you went back. There was no warning at all last night, 2 very short warnings on Monday night so Dad and I have been sleeping upstairs...."

"Sunday, 5th. January 1941"

"We were very pleased to hear you were quite well and that you got the parcel OK. I hope everything was alright and not bent at all. I expect the tarts and cakes were a bit dry and hard by now. Can you remember what day you received it. We received your box of chocolates on Christmas Eve.... We are glad you had such a good time on Xmas Day especially the dinner....

Our Xmas Day wasn't too bad. We had the two chickens. Of course we could not have any ham this year...so I got a small piece of beef to go with them the next day.... Oh Tom I must tell you we have had our first egg today. Dad bought 4 more hens yesterday so if all 6 start laying it won't be too bad. We have only 1 cock left now. We had 2

for ourselves and the other 4 Dad sold to men in the office. If we hadn't had the chickens we would not have had any poultry for dinner as it was a terrible price. Dad came home about 1.30 Xmas Day. Had a few drinks, we did not stay up late as Dolly and Joan had to go to work Boxing Day. Just made our own fun and listened to the wireless.

We are getting plenty of air raids again now, there is one on now. Last Sunday night (29 Dec. 1940) they nearly burnt the City out as I expect you know. We saw the fire from here and we knew it was a terrible fire. It lit up all round here, the reflection I mean and the Friday night before, 2 days after Xmas we nearly caught it. He dropped landmines in Silver St., Edmonton and at the back of the Spurs Football ground and another at Clapton Common. We heard the one in Silver Street alright. Didn't half make us jump. Dolly says it is awful, the houses and shops damaged. (By the way, watch your fags when you come home, she has started to smoke.)"

[From Dad] "Very pleased to hear you enjoyed your Xmas. There's one thing you can always be sure of a good time in the Army at Xmas. It's very nice here tonight Jerry up above and the guns going. You remember the big one, that's going alright. As your Mother has told you we had it hot the other Friday night, I thought we had copped it. The house shook, the curtains blew out. I put my old tin hat on and went down the Cambridge Road but could not see anything."

The raid of 29 December 1940 became known as the Second Great Fire of London. Waves of bombers flying over the heart of the City rained thousands of incendiary bombs on its historic buildings. St Paul's alone remained practically unharmed but was ringed by flames which destroyed many of Wren's famous churches and the Guildhall. The Government realised that many of the fires could have been dealt with if the places had been occupied (it was a Sunday night) and took steps to introduce immediate powers to conscript all employers and employees to share firewatching.

"Monday" [From Mum] "The raid was very heavy last night.... I wonder if he is trying invasion as we had 2 warnings this morning. The first about 9, quiet and didn't last long. The second about 10 and that lasted some time and we heard guns, [and] now this afternoon. It is very dark and cloudy, guns are going, shaking the windows and we can hear planes and machine gunning. I don't think a warning has gone though. Old Mussos army is giving in alright. I shouldn't think he can hold out much longer. You remember Rokers the little sweet shop next to the Parish Hall in Braemar Road. That is knocked down also part of the Parish Hall in last Sunday night raid when he set fire to the city.

I had to line up Saturday for our Sunday meat over an hour. Half the butchers in Tottenham were shut by 10.30 Saturday morning. I lined up from 12.30 to 20 to 2. It was cold. Keeps trying to snow. Friday was a really bitter day and I had to go right

to the Town Hall about my Ration Book, all the others have come except mine. So I shall have to go tomorrow for an emergency card."

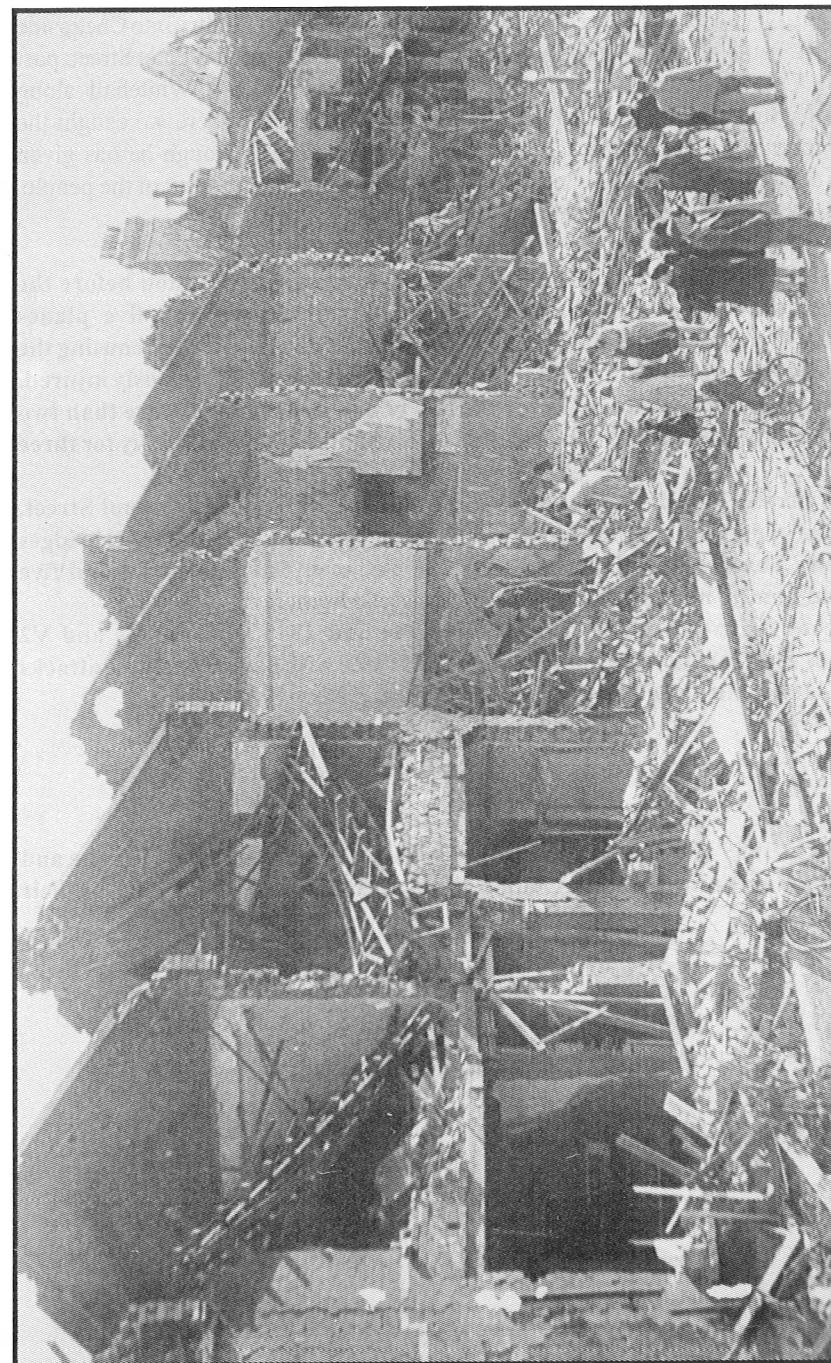
This brings to a conclusion the excerpts from the letters apart from the one to follow written in early June 1941. Following a severe raid on 11 January 1941 the weather prevented any large scale attacks on many nights and by 8 March London had had its longest period of raid free nights of almost six weeks.

"June 1941" [First two pages missing]

"...damage to the Houses of Parliament. But if you are at home when Dad has his holiday it will be worthwhile having a look around. You can never imagine what it is like. Club Row and Petticoat Lane are all smashed down. Just a birds shop standing on the corner. We took a 1s. ticket on a trolley bus from West Green Road, rode to Shoreditch and walked and walked until we got to Westminster Bridge....great big warehouses and factories gutted out, just a mass of bricks and twisted iron girders. We left home just after 2 o'clock and it was 9.15 when we got home again. But Oh Tom the most exciting thing. We had a wonderful view of Mr. Churchill. We were walking along and came to Downing Street. There were crowds on the corner waiting. We just waited a few minutes and then walked up Downing Street. Of course we could not go very far up because of soldiers and police. But some people standing on the edge of the pavement went away, so we just took their place. We were right on the kerb and as far as we were allowed to go. We were only there about 5 minutes when along he came in a car and took his hat off and waved it. Of course there was one great cheer. He does look a nice old Boy, jolly smiling face, seemed quite pleased with himself. Of course our Old Man is kidding himself he waved his hat to him. I suppose when Churchill saw him he thought Good God there's that silly looking xxx standing there that was out in France. But I was pleased I saw him. I don't know what to think about this clothes rationing What a surprise for everybody. But I have 4s.7d. left on a Bradford cheque and did not have time last week to go out as I wanted to get Dad and Boy some socks. Now I am done unless I give up coupons. We had some cheese last Saturday so don't make our mouths water. The old man has just had a chunk of Suet Pudding and Treacle. Don't smack your lips. The treacle jar is empty."

[From Dad] "You have heard that we have had to clear out of Crete, well I am not surprised but I don't think we have much to worry about. He's got to take this little island yet and that he'll never do. If he starts that game over here he'll lose every man he sends. In the last war he beat us back on the Somme but when we turned that finished him and you will see the same thing happen again....

Well Tom your Mother has told you where we went on Monday. This where we walked, off the bus along Shoreditch High Street, up Bethnal Green Road to Club Row, down Bishopsgate to Liverpool Street Station, along Threadneedle Street to the Bank



The second Blitz. Result of a flying bomb (V1) in Falkland Road, Harringay, 10th July 1944

of England, Queen Victoria Street was closed so we went along Poultry into Cheapside down to St. Pauls, then along Ludgate Hill, past the old Bailey down Fleet Street, past the Law Courts, down the Strand to Trafalgar Square. down Whitehall along Parliament Street to Deans Yard then to Westminster Bridge where we caught the tram... some of the places we saw reminded me of France. Though he has given London a knock he hasn't flattened all of it and he can't break the spirit of the people. Your Mother has told you how Winnie raised his hat to ME...."

The raid on the night of 10 May was the final fling against London before the Luftwaffe moved eastwards against Russia. Five hundred and five planes dropped 498 tons of high explosives and incendiaries and land mines, causing the highest casualties of the Blitz with 1,436 people killed and 1,800 seriously injured. Fourteen planes were shot down for the loss of one British one. More than two thousand separate fires were started, their glow lighting the London sky for three nights.

Cannon Street, Paddington, Waterloo, St. Pancras, Euston, Liverpool Street, Blackfriars and Victoria Stations were all put out of action for a time. All bridges across the Thames were hit, as were five docks, over thirty factories and five thousand homes, making twelve thousand people homeless.

The second blitz of London occurred in 1944 and 1945 with the V1 and V2 weapons. The front door at No.7 was blown off twice with blast from these attacks but the family survived to celebrate VE Day on 8 May 1945.

Dad died in 1959 and Mum in 1979. Let this small record of the words she and Dad penned at the time of what Churchill called "Britain's Finest Hour" be their epitaph.

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